

# Orthopaedic Connection

## Animal Bites

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### *Transforming patient information into patient understanding.*

It's OK to wonder, "Why is he talking about animal bites if he is an Orthopaedic Surgeon?" The answer is simple.

Most of the bites are on the hand, arm and leg. Guess who they call for injuries to the hand, arm and leg? Correct!

If the bite is on the hand which most are, the ER rarely calls anyone but me. From nationwide ER records there are usually about 3 million animal bites that are seen every year.

A very high percentage is in children.

Dog bites are the most common, but cat bites are in there too. Cat's sharp teeth cause deeper puncture wounds.

### **Ouch, Two Problems**

Tissue damage, that is skin, nerves, tendons, and muscle can result from the bite that needs to be repaired.

That's bad enough, but infection is a greater problem. Many scary bacteria are deposited in the wound. They have very long, hard to pronounce names you have never heard of!

So damage from animal bites is twofold.

When my cat bites or scratches me, I know what to do. When you have an animal bite I advise you to be seen medically ASAP.

### **Symptoms**

Pain, swelling and redness around the puncture wound = infection. There may be loss of sensation or motion beyond the bite suggesting nerve and/or tendon injury.

### **Evaluation**

1. I need to carefully examine the wound for the degree of tissue damage, depth and drainage.
2. I also routinely take x-rays to rule out fractures and foreign bodies in the wound.
3. If possible, the wound needs to be correctly cultured for bacteria.

### **Treatment**

Treatment can be done sometimes in the ER or the office. In some cases a trip to the operating room is indicated as the best management.

The wounds are not to be taken lightly since serious problems can occur with inadequate or no treatment.

If the wound needs sutures only a few are used to encourage drainage. Antibiotics are routine either IV or oral for several days.

If the bite has resulted in infection, it is probable the victim will be in the hospital for 2 - 3 days and could require further surgery beyond initial treatment.

Rabies prophylaxis is beyond the scope of this discussion.

#### **Note**

A lady said to me this week, "Before I read your articles, I thought Orthopaedic Surgeons just treated bones, but you write about a lot of other things."

Yes it's true, I treat lots more than just bones. Much more.

Merry Christmas. Happy New Year!

See you next week.

#### **Gratiot County Herald Archive and Office Website**

A great source of all of the musculoskeletal information that you need can be found at [www.orthopodsurgeon.com](http://www.orthopodsurgeon.com). It contains a tremendous amount of musculoskeletal information that can be very helpful to you, your family and friends.

In addition, it is your entry to the Gratiot County Herald archive of all articles I have written for Gratiot County Herald Orthopaedic Connection. All of the articles are listed, most recent all the way back to the first. A couple of mouse clicks and the whole article appears.

The articles and website cover every thing I treat in the office and hospital. Please log on and check it out.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives. I specialize in you.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush