

Human Bite Wounds
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Background Information:

Bites make up 1% of visits to the emergency department. Dog bites account for 85%, cats 10%, and human < 5%. Even though human bite wounds are the least common, they are the most dangerous with the highest infection and complication rate. Human bites have very high concentrations of bacteria. The fight bite is the most common where the clinched fist makes contact with a mouth. About 1/3 of all hand infections result from human bite wounds. These infections can progress quickly so early treatment is necessary. Joints can become infected and lead to septic arthritis. If someone obtains a human bite wound where the skin is broken, they should seek first aid and see a doctor within 24 hours.

What are the signs & symptoms of infection?

- Warmth around the bite wound
- Pain
- Swelling
- Pus or yellow drainage from the wound

What are the signs of damage to tendons or nerves?

- An inability to bend or straighten the finger
- A loss of sensation over the tip of the finger

What to do first?

Don't put the bitten area in your mouth.

If there is no bleeding, wash the wound thoroughly. Use soap and water or an antiseptic such as hydrogen peroxide or alcohol. Apply an antibiotic ointment and cover with a nonstick bandage. Watch the area carefully to see if there are signs of damaged nerves or tendons. If there is, seek medical attention quickly.

If there is bleeding, apply direct pressure with a clean dry cloth. Elevate the area. Do not clean a wound that is actively bleeding. Cover the wound with a clean dressing and seek medical attention. In these situations, early intervention (< 24 hours) is needed to prevent complications. Complications include skin, joint, bone, blood, or heart valve infections, or death.

What will they do in the ER?

Be sure to tell your doctor how you got the bite wound. Your doctor will measure the wound, note the location, and check for signs of infection, nerve, or tendon damage. You may need X-rays and a blood test. Also, you may need a tetanus shot and a prescription for antibiotics. You may need to return for follow up visit so that the doctor can make sure an infection has not developed. If tendons or nerves are damaged, you may need referral to a hand surgeon. In addition you may be tested or immunized for hepatitis exposure.



For additional information:

<http://www.jaapa.com/issues/j20030401/articles/bites.html>

<http://www.chclibrary.org/micromed/00051600.html>

[http://www.dynomed.com/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/hand_and_wrist/Human Bites of the Hand.html](http://www.dynomed.com/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/hand_and_wrist/Human_Bites_of_the_Hand.html)

http://www.healthatoz.com/healthatoz/Atoz/ency/human_bite_infections.jsp