

# Lacerations and Animal Bites

## Call the doctor if your child:

- Has an animal bite or human bite that breaks the skin, even if it seems very minor.
- Has a wound is swollen, tender, or draining fluid. This may suggest infection.
- Has a cut that continues to bleed after 5 -10 minutes of direct pressure with a clean cloth.
- If the cut is deep (through the skin).
- If the edges of the wound gape open or don't come together properly.
- If you think there may be dirt, glass, or another object inside the cut.
- Has a bleeding disorder or clotting problem.
- Feels numb outside of the wound or has decreased movement.
- If you see any of these things while the cut is healing, call your child's doctor:
  - Increasing redness or swelling around the cut.
  - Pus-like drainage, or oozing from the wound that smells bad.
  - Red streaks coming from the area around the cut
  - Fever (See Fever section).
  - Increasing pain in the area of the wound.

Call

## What can I do to care for an animal bite?

Clean the area with soap and water immediately.

- If the bite is bleeding, apply pressure for several minutes with a clean cloth to stop the bleeding.
- Call your child's doctor immediately and be prepared to describe the animal.

## Cuts and Lacerations

All children get cuts. Most cuts are minor and do not require medical attention. Cuts that will need sutures (stitches) are deep and leave the skin edges separated. Deep cuts on the face that are longer than 1/4 inch will need stitches. Anywhere else on the body, deep cuts that are longer than 1/2 inch will need stitches. Some cuts may be deep enough to involve the muscles and nerves below the skin, so it is important for a doctor to examine deep cuts.

## What can I do to care for a cut at home?

Using a clean cloth, press down directly on the wound for 5-10 minutes to stop the bleeding.

- Clean the area gently with warm water and soap. Be sure to remove all the dirt and debris in the wound.
- Apply an antibiotic ointment and cover the cut with a bandage or gauze until a scab forms.
- Once the scab has formed, the wound doesn't need to be covered.
- Watch your child's wound for signs of infection (swelling, pus, red streaks).

## The Facts:

Most bites occur from pets in the home or from other people, but children can get bitten by wild animals as well. The main concern with any bite is infection, especially if the bite has broken the skin. Bites can get infected very easily and your child may need medicine to prevent the spread of infection. Even though the skin seems clean, there may be bacteria underneath the skin in the bite. Less commonly, wild animals or house pets who have not received all of their shots may spread serious diseases to your child through biting.

## Animal Bite Prevention

- Teach your child not to approach wild animals (dead or alive).
- Teach your child to stay away from animals when they are eating.
- Notify police if you see a sick or injured animal, or an animal who is acting strangely.
- Make sure all pets in the home have had their shots.

## Cut Prevention

Active and curious children are bound to get some cuts and scrapes, but here are some things you can do to reduce the chance of deep cuts and infection.

- Keep knives, breakable glass objects, scissors and razor blades out of the reach of young children. If you have a dishwasher, keep it latched shut.
- Look for sharp corners or rough edges on furniture. Cover them with corner guards or edge cushions.
- Place safety latches on cabinets and drawers within reach of your child.
- Remove broken toys from your child's play area.
- At regular intervals, check your house, yard, and garage for potentially dangerous objects. As your child grows, make sure these objects are still securely out of reach.
- Keep antibiotic ointment and bandages in the house for minor cuts.