



University of North Carolina Wilmington  
Abrons Student Health Center

## INSTRUCTION SHEET: HUMAN BITE

The Student Health Provider has started treatment for a human bite wound.

All animal bites are contaminated wounds, at high risk for infection. Animals, including man, have millions of bacteria (germs) in their mouth. When a human bites another human and breaks the skin, germs are pushed into normally germ-free tissue layers under the skin. The bacteria can multiply rapidly, leading to infection.

Deep bite wounds have more chance of infection, and need to be watched closely. Superficial (not deep) “scratch” wounds have less chance of infection.

Although wound infection is the main concern with a human bite wound, passing diseases such as hepatitis (liver infection), HIV, or rabies are theoretically possible. Fortunately, the chances of getting these diseases from a human bite wound are very tiny (there is only one known case of passing HIV through a bite wound).

### MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR BITE WOUND:

1. The best initial treatment of any bite wound is immediate flushing with water, and washing the wound with soap and water: Germs are flushed from the wound before they gain a foothold; chances of infection are reduced.
2. Rest the bitten part. Elevate the area above the level of your heart.
3. Over-the-counter pain medications can help relieve the discomfort of a bite wound; acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen, or naproxen can be taken, depending on individual preference.
4. If a preventive antibiotic is prescribed (only in some instances will one be prescribed), take it as directed, until gone.
5. If you have reason to believe that the person who bit you has hepatitis, HIC, or rabies, you should immediately inform the doctor treating you today.
6. Clean the wound daily with soap and water. Wound cleaning can be done in the bath or shower. After cleaning, leave the wound open to air, or apply a dressing (apply an over-the-counter antibacterial ointment and cover the wound with gauze).
7. **MOST IMPORTANTLY, IF YOU DEVELOP SIGNS OF INFECTION, RETURN TO THE STUDENT HEALTH CENTER OR GO TO THE CLOSEST EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT *PROMPTLY*.** Signs of infection include: pus draining from the wound, increasing redness/swelling/warmth around the wound, or red streaks spreading from the wound.