

Lakeview Community Wellness Center 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. The wound is never tightly closed.

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.

Office Website and Lakeview Area News Archive

The office website www.orthopodsurgeon.com is a great source for all the Orthopaedic and musculoskeletal information you need.

All the Orthopaedic problems I treat are contained in the website and Your Orthopaedic Connection.

In addition Lakeview Area News archive of all past articles can be found on the website. The full text of every article!

Check out this tremendous collection of information.

All of this information pertains to everything I treat in the office, the Lakeview Community Wellness Center Clinic and the hospital.

Orthopaedic Clinic

I appreciate your support of the Orthopaedic Clinic I have at Lakeview Community Wellness Center. All of the Orthopaedic problems I treat can be evaluated there.

Approaching Clinic dates are February 17 and March 1, 2012.

Patients can call 989-463-6092 for an appointment at the Lakeview Community Wellness Center Orthopaedic Clinic or at the office in Alma. No referral is required.

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