

Bite Wounds

Although dog bite wounds and cat bite wounds are quite common, they can be very severe and often life threatening. Unfortunately, animal mouths contain a large amount of bacteria and these wounds are very prone to severe infection. The crushing force of the bite and additional trauma from fighting can severely bruise and damage deeper tissues that may not be initially evident.

Due to the amount of trauma involved and high likelihood for infection, bite wounds are prone to ongoing complications such as necrosis(death) of tissues, dehiscence/failure of surgical closure, resistant infections, and other complications, even despite the most aggressive treatment.

The initial treatment of bite wounds involves aggressive flushing and attempted decontamination. Bite wounds are very painful and deep sedation is usually needed to get adequate cleaning and debridement completed. Multiple oral pain medications are also sent home to keep patients comfortable while they heal. Many bite wounds contain deep pocketing from the trauma involved and external drains are needed to help with proper drainage and prevention of infection. Puncture wounds, and most bite wounds in general, are intentionally left open to allow for drainage, as it is impossible to remove all of the bacteria introduced from the bite.

Depending on the severity of the wounds, Hospitalization, IV fluids and IV antibiotics may be recommended to most aggressively treat and help prevent infection. Less severe wounds can often be treated with oral broad spectrum antibiotics. If wounds are not responding appropriately, bacterial culture and sensitivity is needed to rule out an antibiotic resistant infection.

Unfortunately, animal bite wounds are very unpredictable in how they will respond to treatment and owner vigilance is needed to watch for any early signs of complications. Initial treatment generally ranges anywhere between \$500-\$1500; this does not include hospitalization or additional costs possibly needed for severe trauma cases involving broken bones or penetration into the trachea, chest, or abdomen. Many bite wounds will require multiple sedated procedures for debridement and revision of closures that will incur additional costs from the initial treatment. Veterinary attention to any concerns is very important to allow for the best and most effective treatment. Prompt treatment of the wounds is the best way to try and prevent infection or future complications, but there is no guarantee even with treatment that the wounds will be treated in a one-time visit, and often require multiple veterinary treatments to heal.

For infected wounds or wounds that are not surgically repairable at the time, bandaging is often needed to help draw out infection and start the healing process. This usually requires once daily to twice daily bandage changes done by a veterinarian over several days to weeks, depending on how the wound responds. Each bandage change ranges from \$65-\$120 (based on size and location of wounds), and further sedated surgical debridement is often needed which would also incur additional charges. Complications associated with wet or soiled bandages are also common, and owners need to be very careful to keep bandages clean and dry, and bring any concerns to their veterinarian's attention immediately. It is also very important to keep the pet from licking, chewing, or scratching at any wounds or bandages to prevent further damage/infection and allow the wounds to heal. An e-collar (cone) is usually needed to be kept on at all times to prevent this behavior.

Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy is a medical treatment that allows 100% oxygen to be delivered into the body under deep compressions. Large amounts of oxygen can diffuse four times deeper into the tissue than oxygen carried by red blood cells, and can help save and revitalize wounded tissues. This may also help to prevent additional surgeries due to infection and dehiscence by up to 75%, and may be recommended 2 to 3 times daily until wounds are healed.