

UniversityHealthServices

We heal. We educate. We care.

ANIMAL BITES

Animal bites can lead to a variety of serious infections. Rabies is one example of an infection that can be transmitted to any warm-blooded animal, including humans. If an animal bites you, here's what you should do:

- Wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water and apply antiseptic.
- See your physician immediately for medical treatment.
- If the bite is from a cat or dog that has been vaccinated for rabies, the animal should be examined by a veterinarian and quarantined for 10 days. If the bite is from an animal which is kept as a pet, but that normally lives in the wild, the animal should be sacrificed and taken to the Animal Disease Laboratory at Penn State for testing. If the animal under observation dies or is severely ill during the quarantine period, it should be examined for rabies. If the bite is from a wild animal, the animal should be taken to a laboratory for examination. If it is necessary to kill the animal in order to bring it in for observation, damage to the head should be avoided since the brain area is important in making a diagnosis for rabies. Do not handle dead animals with your hand; use a shovel or wear heavy gloves.

Recommendations to prevent rabies include:

- Check with your veterinarian for your pets' status (both dogs and cats) concerning rabies vaccination. Keep vaccinations current!
- Keep dogs and cats on leashes if they are outside.
- Avoid keeping wild animals as pets since they could be incubating rabies and cannot be safely immunized against rabies.
- License dogs so that they can be traced if they stray from home.

Any animal that is observed behaving in an abnormal manner should be immediately reported to the local law enforcement agency or the Game Commission. Abnormal behavior is characterized by such actions as:

- Aggressiveness
- Excitability
- Running in circles
- Snapping at moving objects
- Foaming at the mouth
- Seemingly unusual tame, docile conduct
- Disorientation
- Lack of coordination
- Drooling
- Appearing during the daylight hours if ordinarily a nocturnal animal (one that is active only at night).

Do not play with wild or stray animals! This includes those "cute looking" squirrels on campus!

For further information, contact the Pennsylvania Department of Health at 1 (717) 787-3550. To contact the Pennsylvania Department of Health after 4:30 pm and on weekends, call 1 (877) 724-3258.

Dog and cat bites must be reported to the State College Department of Health at (814) 865-0932.

You must schedule an appointment to be seen at University Health Services by calling (814) 863-0774.

Students at campuses other than University Park should contact their Campus Health Center.

Test Results and Advice Nurse

Please call the nurse for test results and advice: 863-4463

Appointments

Appointments can be made in person or by phone. If you are unable to keep your appointment, please call and cancel. Otherwise you will be charged for the visit.

To schedule or cancel appointments, call: 863-0774

For more information about health care issues, visit the UHS Web site at www.sa.psu.edu/uhs

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

Derm_AnimalBites_042705

Approved by Patient Education Committee: 04/27/05

This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. This information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.