

Bites & Stings

For Bites

Signs & Symptoms

- Swelling. Redness. Pain. Itching.
- Bleeding.
- Tissue loss, if the wound is severe.
- Skin rash.
- **Lockjaw.** This is a painful, persistent stiffness of the jaw due to a toxin. Tetanus shots can prevent this. (See **Immunization Schedule** at www.HealthyLearn.com.)
- Allergic reaction, such as with insect bites. (See **Signs & Symptoms of Allergies** at www.HealthyLearn.com.)

Causes

- Dog, cat, and human bites are the most common animal bites in the U.S.
- Deer tick bites can cause **Lyme disease**, a bacterial infection.
- Bed bug bites cause redness, swelling, and large, red welts or raised areas on the skin.
- Black widow and brown recluse spider bites can cause severe reactions.



Deer tick on scalp

- Less common, but more dangerous, are bites from skunks, raccoons, bats, and other animals that live in the wild. These animals can have **rabies** – a serious viral infection. It can be fatal. Most house pets are vaccinated for rabies. It's unlikely they carry the virus.
- Mosquito bites can cause **West Nile virus** if the mosquito is infected with it.
- Snake bites can be fatal if the bite is from a poisonous snake (e.g., rattlesnakes, cottonmouths, copperheads, and coral snakes).
- Shark bites are a potential problem when swimming in shark-infested waters.

Treatment

Self-care can be used for dog and cat bites that cause scratches on the skin and for insect bites that do not cause a severe allergic reaction. All human bites that break the skin should be checked by a doctor due to the high risk for infection.

A series of rabies shots can prevent the spread of rabies to humans. The shots should begin soon after a bite from an infected animal.

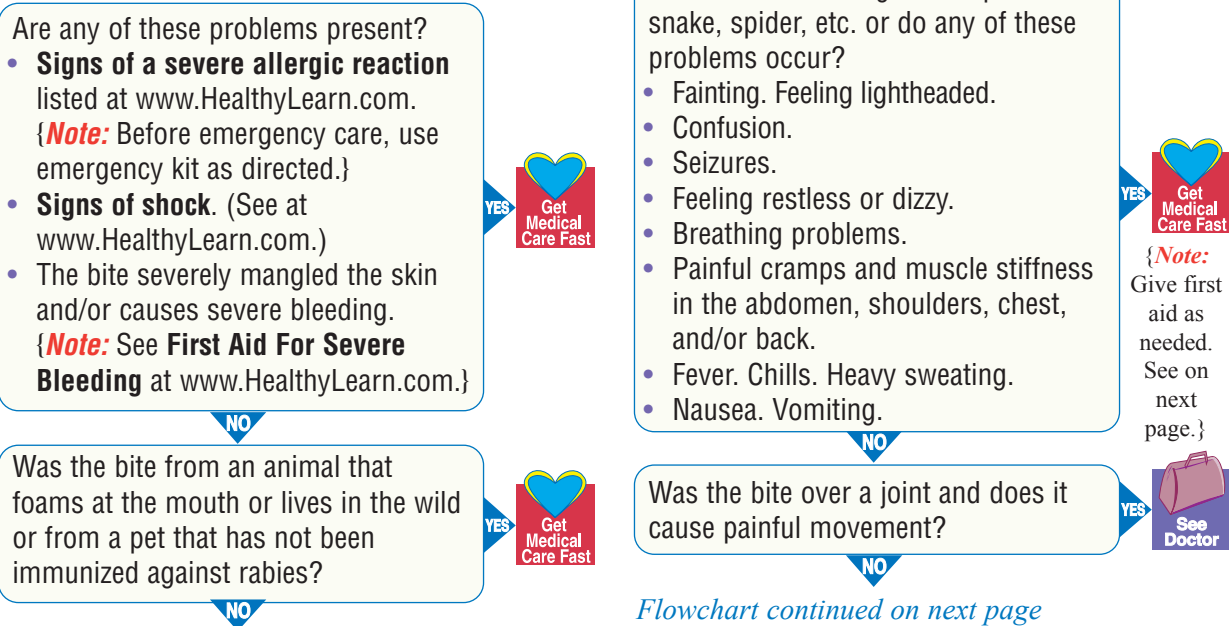
Antivenom can be given for poisonous snake bites at emergency medical facilities. It should be given within 4 hours of the bite.



Bites & Stings, Continued

For Stings	
<p>Signs & Symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Quick, sharp pain.■ Swelling, itching, and redness at the sting site. These can occur beyond the sting site.■ Raised bump (with or without pus).■ Signs of a severe allergic reaction. (See at www.HealthyLearn.com.) <p>Causes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Insect stings. (See at www.HealthyLearn.com.)■ Marine animals that sting include jellyfish, Portuguese Man-of-War, and sea nettles.	<p>Treatment</p> <p>Self-care treats mild reactions to stings. A severe allergic reaction needs immediate care. Symptoms of a severe allergic reaction usually happen soon after or within an hour of the sting.</p> <p>Persons with a severe allergic reaction to a sting in the past should carry an emergency kit, prescribed by a doctor. A medical alert tag should be worn to let others know of the allergy. Persons who have had severe reactions to bee or wasp stings should ask their doctors about allergy shots.</p>

Questions to Ask



Flowchart continued in next column

Flowchart continued on next page



For Non-Poisonous Snake Bites

- Gently wash the site with soap and water.
- Treat the bite as a minor wound. (See **For Minor Cuts and Scrapes** at www.HealthyLearn.com.)
- If you notice signs of an infection, call your doctor.

For Poisonous Spider Bites Until Emergency Care Arrives

- Perform rescue breathing, if needed. (See **“Rescue Breath”** at www.HealthyLearn.com.)
- If you can, keep the bitten area lower than the level of the heart.
- Calm the person and keep him or her warm.
- Gently clean the site of the bite with soap and water or rubbing alcohol.
- Put an ice pack over the bite site for pain relief.
- If you can, catch the spider in a closed container to show what kind it is.

Bites & Stings, Continued

Do you have a fever, pus, or increased swelling and/or redness 24 or more hours after the animal bite?



Self-Care / First Aid

For Poisonous Snake Bites Before Medical Care

- Carefully move the person away from the snake. Calm the person. Have him or her rest. Moving about can help spread the venom.
- Gently wash the bite area with soap and water. Keep the limb of the bite site level with the heart (or just below this). Apply a splint to the limb of the bite site to keep it from moving.
- Being careful, note, if you can, the shape of the snakes eyes, pupils, and head, the colors it is, and if it has rattles.
- Don't try to kill the snake, cut the fang mark, or suck out the venom.
- Don't apply a tourniquet, a bandage, or ice to the bite.

For Poisonous Spider and Scorpion Bites Before Medical Care

- Do rescue breathing, if needed.
- If you can, keep the bitten area lower than the level of the heart.
- Calm the victim and keep him or her warm.
- Gently clean the site of the bite with soap and water or rubbing alcohol.
- Put an ice pack over the bite site to relieve pain.
- If you can, catch the spider in a closed container to show the doctor.
- Get emergency care!

For Human Bites Before Medical Care

- Wash the wound area with soap and water for at least 5 minutes. Don't scrub hard. Rinse with running water or with an antiseptic solution, such as Betadine.
- Cover the wound area with sterile gauze. Tape only the ends of the gauze in place. Then get medical care.



Bites & Stings, Continued

For Deer Tick Bites

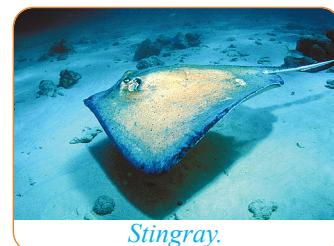
- Remove any ticks found on the skin. Use tweezers to grasp the tick(s) as close to the skin as you can. Pull gently and carefully in a steady upward motion at the point where the tick's mouthpart enters the skin. Try not to crush the tick. The secretions released may spread disease.
- After you remove the ticks, wash the wound area and your hands with soap and water. Apply rubbing alcohol to help disinfect the area.
- Use an ice pack over the bite area to relieve pain.
- Save one tick in a closed jar with rubbing alcohol to show the doctor.

For Dog and Cat Bites

- Wash the bite area right away with soap and warm water for 5 minutes. If the bite is deep, flush the wound with water for 10 minutes. Dry the wound with a clean towel. Then get medical care.
- If the wound is swollen, apply ice wrapped in a towel for 10 minutes.
- Get a tetanus shot, if needed.
- If the bite hurts, take an over-the-counter (OTC) medicine for pain.
- Report the incident to the animal control department. If a pet's immunizations are not current, arrange with the animal control department for the pet to be observed for the next 10 days to check for rabies.
- Observe the wound for a few days. Look for signs of infection. Often, cat bite wounds need an antibiotic.

For a Stingray Bite

- Remove the person from the water.
- Apply a local pressure bandage for a wound that bleeds a lot.
- Immerse the wound area in hot water for 30 to 90 minutes. Make sure the water is not hot enough to burn the skin.
- Scrub the wound area well with soap and water.
- Unless the wound is a slight one in only one limb, get medical help right away.



For Stings from Jellyfish or Sea Nettle, etc.

- Remove the person from the water. Don't touch the sting area with bare hands.
- Rinse the sting area with salt (not fresh) water right away. Don't put ice on the skin. If you can, put vinegar or rubbing alcohol on the area several times for 30 or more minutes until the pain is relieved.
- Apply dry or moist heat to the sting area until the pain subsides. You can mix one part ammonia with 3 parts salt water and apply this to the sting area.
- Wear gloves when you remove stingers. Use a towel to wipe the stingers or the tentacles off. Use tweezers to lift large tentacles. Don't scrape or rub them.
- To relieve itching, apply OTC calamine lotion or 1% hydrocortisone cream to the affected area as directed on the label.
- Contact your doctor for any **signs of infection**. (See at www.HealthyLearn.com.)