



## WOUND CARE

### ABSCESSSES

An abscess is a localized collection of pus under the skin. It is usually the result of a penetrating wound, which heals quickly superficially, trapping bacteria below the surface. The body fights the infection by sending in pus cells (neutrophils). The infection will kill tissue locally which adds to the contents of the pus. This process causes pain and local swelling and usually a fever. The infection can spread to other parts of the body and may lead to septicemia (“blood poisoning”) and death.

Abscesses are more commonly seen in the cat than in the dog, but they do occur in both. Cat bite wounds are especially prone to abscess. Treatment will depend on the stage of the abscess formation, the size and location of the involved area, and the general health status of the animal. All abscesses will require antibiotics and some will require surgery to open the infected pocket and remove the dead tissue and pus.

Successful recovery depends heavily on the home care phase of the treatment. If the abscess required surgical drainage, a rubber drain may have been installed. Keeping that site clean and allowing continued drainage so the pocket can heal from the inside to the outside is important. Warm, moist compresses held against the area 3-4 times daily for 15 minutes will help keep the drainage open and stimulate deep healing. Clean away any drainage with a clean moist cloth or tissue.

Whether drainage was needed or not, your pet should take all the antibiotics prescribed. If you have trouble giving it the medicine, CALL US. Keep your pet confined indoors. Check the area of the abscess several times daily. Call us if you notice any abnormalities, lack of appetite, or decrease in water consumption. The best way to avoid most abscesses is to keep a pet indoors or on a leash. Neutering of male cats is recommended because it decreases the urge to fight.

### LACERATIONS

Do not allow your pet to lick or chew at the stitches. Check the incision several times daily. Watch for swelling, redness, or drainage. Confine your pet to a

clean, dry place (indoors is best) until the stitches are removed—usually in about 10 to 12 days after surgery.

If the wound was contaminated or badly traumatized and was sutured, the stitches could easily become infected and should be watched closely. Sometimes, multiple surgical procedures will be needed to close a large wound. Often an older or badly contaminated wound can not be sutured closed. Sometimes we have to treat a pet with medicine for several days before a wound can be safely closed. If there is substantial drainage the wound may have to be left open with the pet on oral antibiotics.

Drains may be placed in severely infected or contaminated wounds. The animal should not be allowed to lick or chew at the drain. Drains should be kept clean using water or hydrogen peroxide (3%) on a clean cloth or tissue. Gently massaging the drain site may be helpful in encouraging drainage. Any animal who has a drain placed should be kept indoors and reexamined by a veterinarian in three days (or sooner if problems arise).

If the wound was bandaged, keep the bandage dry and clean. You may cover it with a heavy plastic bag to take a dog outside, but then remove the bag once indoors again. DO NOT allow the pet to run loose. DO NOT bathe the pet while it is wearing a bandage.

A possible indication of a problem under a bandage is a pet that is chewing on it when previously it left it alone. Pain or swelling above or below the bandage may be a problem. Also loosening of the bandage could be unexpected.

### Call Us If...

- Exposed sutures are removed by the pet or if it otherwise irritates the incision or drain.
- You have trouble giving the prescribed medicine.
- There is additional swelling or drainage from the area.
- There seems to be a change in your pet’s general health.

*Thank you for this opportunity to serve you!*

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