Human Bite

Human bites may require a tetanus shot. Bites have a high incidence of infection, so they require good cleaning. Wounds over important parts of the body (joints, for example) may require surgery to remove infected tissue. Bites that occur over the knuckles are serious and require immediate treatment. They can cause infection in the tendon sheath which can spread rapidly through the hand. Hospitalization with intravenous medication may be needed for human bites. X-rays may be needed if a foreign body, such as a tooth, is in the wound. Bites frequently become infected in spite of good cleaning because the teeth inject germs *(bacteria*) through the skin.

YOU MIGHT NEED A TETANUS SHOT NOW IF:

- You have no idea when you had the last one.
- You have never had a tetanus shot before.
- Your wound had dirt in it.
- If you need a tetanus shot, and you choose not to get one, there is a rare chance of getting tetanus. Sickness from tetanus can be serious.

If you got a tetanus shot, your arm may swell, get red and warm to the touch at the shot site. This is common and not a problem.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Keep wound clean, dry and dressed as suggested by your caregiver.
- If medications that kill germs (*antibiotics*) were prescribed, take them as directed and finish the prescription, even if the wound appears to be doing well.
- Keep injured part raised above the level of the heart as much as possible.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- Follow instructions for follow-up with your caregiver. Any delay in obtaining necessary care could result in a serious infection.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- There is redness, swelling, or increasing pain in the wound.
- Pus is coming from wound.
- An unexplained oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C) develops, or as your caregiver suggests.
- You notice a foul smell coming from the wound or dressing.
- Stitches (*sutur*es) were required, and there is a breaking open of the *wound* (edges not staying together) after sutures have been removed.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You feel sick to your stomach (*nausea*) or have vomiting, chills or a high temperature.
- If pain prevents joint from movement when the bite was near a joint.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

Document Released: 04/07/2004 Document Re-Released: 01/09/2011
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.