

## Open Wound Care

### ***What is a wound?***

A wound is an injury causing damage to the skin and often the underlying tissues. It can be an open wound such as a cut or a closed wound such as a contusion or bruise.

### ***What should I do if a wound is bleeding?***

Initially attempt to stop the bleeding by applying direct pressure to the wound with an adsorbent dressing such as dry gauze, followed by a layer of bandage material or a clean dry cloth. This will protect the wound during transport to the veterinary hospital and prevent any further contamination of the injury.



If possible, try to raise the affected area above the level of the heart. This will help reduce the flow of blood to the bleeding area.

Do not apply ointments or any other chemicals to the wound, as they can interfere with its eventual healing.

### ***Why leave a wound open?***

Most open wounds are contaminated with bacteria after several hours and often contain foreign material such as dirt, grit or hair. If possible, your veterinarian will try to clean this wound and repair it, either immediately or after several days, depending on its size and degree of contamination.

When the wound is open for an extended period of time, usually longer than four to six hours or grossly infected such as a cat bite abscess, it will often be left to heal without surgical closure. Most of these wounds are treated using a combination of repeated flushing, bandaging and antibiotic therapy. In the cases mentioned above, this treatment is the way to promote a speedy recovery of your cat's injury.

### ***How should I manage an open wound at home?***

Following the specific instructions of your veterinarian, clean the wound two to three times daily with a mild antiseptic solution or warm water to remove any crusted discharge and keep wound edges clean.

Bandaging daily, as demonstrated by your veterinarian, may also be required if there is a lot of discharge from the wound and to prevent your cat from excessively licking the area.

***Is any other medication required?***

Most likely, your cat will be given a course of antibiotics, especially if the wound is infected or suspected of being contaminated. No topical treatments should be used, unless specifically directed by your veterinarian, as some seemingly harmless chemicals can actually damage tissues and delay wound healing.

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*This client information sheet is based on material written by L Ernest Ward, DVM  
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