

Dog (and other mammalian) bite treatment

Puncture wounds from a dog bite should be cleaned with gentle irrigation and left open. One should assess whether any vital structures have been penetrated, which would guide further assessment. Although somewhat controversial, prophylactic antibiotic treatment with Augmentin can prevent infection. Tetanus prophylaxis and verification of rabies status should be accomplished.

A laceration, likewise, must be assessed for injury to tendons and visceral structures. If no such involvement is present, irrigation with 1 L of saline per inch of laceration should be accomplished. Primary closure is not warranted after six hours.. Even within the six-hour timeframe, complete closure of the laceration can result in trapping of bacteria and consequent infection.

A better result in the first six hours would be the use of loose suturing so that the ends of the laceration are partially approximated. This would allow for drainage of any potential infection as well as early healing of deeper structures. After 7 to 10 days, if the wound is clean, secondary closure is recommended with debridement and careful skin approximation with trimming as necessary.