



BITE MARKS

Bite marks, while often considered a peril of childhood, can connote serious intimate partner violence (IPV). Teeth are often used as weapons in an assault, as well as a method of self-defense when being assaulted (Sweet & Pretty, 2001). Biting, like strangulation, is an “up close and personal” event, suggesting a high level of physical danger. While research demonstrates that the most common place of injury in intimate partner assaults is the head, face and neck; bite marks are also common on the arms and on areas which cannot be seen while wearing clothing, such as the breasts and the genitals (Sheridan and Nash, 2007).

DEFINITIONS

A human bite is defined as any wound caused by contact with a person's teeth. The wound may be deep and may cause injury to bones, muscles, and other body parts (Drugs.com, 2017).

PREVALENCE

- Bites inflicted by humans are the third most common type of bites seen in emergency departments (after dog and cat bites) (Barrett and Bruschi, 2016).
- Despite lack of research data, many hospital-based programs and community advocates see human bite injuries in conjunction with other injuries related to IPV.

EFFECTS

- Human bites are often more serious than animal bites.
- 10%-15% of human bites will become infected, as a result of bacteria and organisms in a person's mouth.
- Human bites may transmit hepatitis B or C, herpes simplex virus, tuberculosis, tetanus and other serious infectious diseases. There is also some evidence of HIV transmission, albeit very rare (Barrett and Bruschi, 2016).
- The majority of patients will need prophylactic antibiotic treatment, tetanus prophylaxis or booster (Tabbara, Hatzigianni, Fux, Zimmerman, Exadaktylos, 2012.)

INTERVENTIONS

- If there is bleeding, apply firm direct pressure with sterile gauze or a clean cloth to stop it.
- Cleanse the wound thoroughly with soap and large amounts of cool running water.
- Applying ice may help with pain.
- Apply topical antibiotic ointment.
- Watch for signs of infection (increasing pain, swelling, warmth, redness, pus drainage, red streaks, fever, and chills).
- Seek medical attention for:
 - A tetanus shot (if patient is not up to date on vaccines).
 - Antibiotics to treat/prevent a possible infection, especially if the skin is broken.
 - Possible closure of the wound.



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REFERENCES

Barrett, J., Bruschi, J.L. (2016) Human bites. Retrieved from:

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Sweet, D., Pretty, I. A., (2001). A look at forensic dentistry - Part 2: Teeth as weapons of violence - identification of bitemark perpetrators. *British Dental Journal*, 190(8), 415-418.

Tabbara, M., Hatziagianni, P., Fux, C., Zimmerman, H., Exadaktylos, A.K. (2012), Human bite wounds: A Swiss emergency department experience. *Wounds*, 24(4).

RESOURCES

National Institute of Health US Library of Medicine

"Managing human bites"

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2776367/>

American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons

Human Bites OrthoInfo Fact Sheet

orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=A00003

EMedicine Health

Human Bites Fact Sheet

emedicinehealth.com/human_bites/article_em.htm