

Wounds - Cat Bite Injuries to Humans

Why do cat bites get infected so easily?

When a cat bites, its sharp canine teeth easily puncture the skin, leaving small, but deep, wounds in the skin.

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These punctures rapidly seal over, trapping bacteria from the cat's mouth under the skin of the victim, where they can readily multiply. A similar type of injury happens with cat scratches - the extremely sharp, curved nails penetrate deep into the skin, essentially injecting bacteria deep into the puncture wound. Depending on the location and depth of the wound, the bacteria can spread in the surrounding tissues causing a condition called *cellulitis*.

Are cat bites dangerous?

Cat bites can be dangerous both to other animals and to humans. In their mouths, all cats carry a large number of bacteria that are capable of causing tissue infections in bite wounds. One of the more common is highly pathogenic bacterium known as *Pasteurella multocida*. An infected cat bite wound will be red, swollen and painful, and the infection can spread through the surrounding tissues, causing a condition called *cellulitis*, or through the blood to other areas of the body, causing a condition called *septicemia* (often called "blood poisoning"). Infected people may suffer from fever and flu-like symptoms and, rarely, may die if proper medical treatment is not sought. Children, the elderly, ill and immunosuppressed individuals are particularly vulnerable to developing severe infections if bitten by a cat.

