Animal Bites and Rabies

Why are we concerned about animal bites?
A person can get rabies if bitten by a domestic or wild animal infected with the rabies virus. Rabies is a preventable disease, but if left untreated, a person or animal will die once they show signs and symptoms of the disease.

What should I do if an animal bites me?
Wash the wound with soap and lots of water and seek medical attention. If the animal is:

- A dog, cat, or ferret with its owner: Stop right away and do not leave the area. Get the owner's contact information and the pet's rabies vaccination information. Healthy dogs, cats, and ferrets are confined for 10 days and monitored for signs of illness.
- A wild animal: Try to safely trap the animal and do not let it get away. Do not try to pick up the animal or damage the head of the animal. Wild animals are euthanized (put down) and tested. There is no routine observation period for wild animals. Report the incident immediately.
- A bat: Safely trap the bat and do not let it escape. Bats have small sharp teeth so it is hard to know if you have been bitten, especially if you wake up to find it flying around in your bedroom. Report the incident immediately.
- A stray or any animal that runs away: Remember where you were when bitten, what the animal looks like, and what direction it went. Report the incident immediately.

Report the incident to Animal Control and your local health department. When a biting animal is not available for observation or testing, additional medical treatment may be needed.

For more information visit: www.vdh.virginia.gov/animal-contact-human-health/rabies-control

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