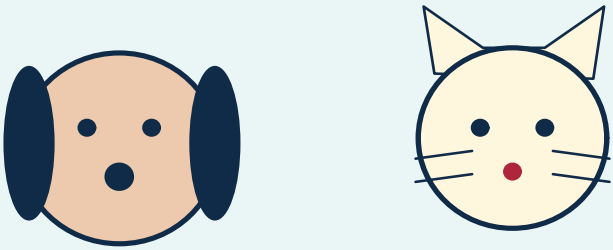
Dog and cat bites

Wash promptly and assess infection risk



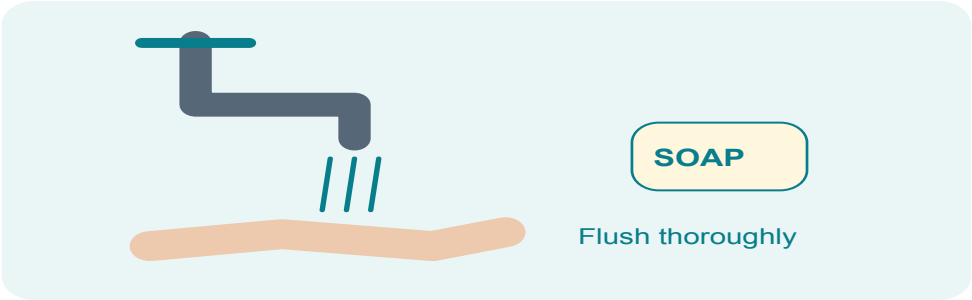
Small punctures can need treatment

Some bites need emergency care

Call 112 if heavy bleeding cannot be controlled, or the person is collapsing. Large or deep wounds need emergency assessment.

Arrange same-day advice if skin is broken, especially a cat puncture or a bite on the hand, face, foot or over a joint.

First aid straight away



Soap + running water. Do not delay medical assessment.

1 Get away safely

Move out of danger. Do not try to catch an unfamiliar or aggressive animal.

2 Wash thoroughly

Wash the wound with soap and running water. Flush for about 15 minutes, particularly if rabies exposure is possible.

For heavy bleeding, apply firm pressure with a clean cloth or dressing and seek urgent help.

3 Protect and seek advice

After cleaning an ordinary bite, pat dry and apply a clean dressing. Do not seal it with household glue or close it yourself.

Tell the clinician if there may be a tooth or other material in the wound.

What the clinician checks

Infection and deeper injury

Small punctures can hide deeper damage. Seek urgent review for increasing pain, redness, swelling, pus, fever or reduced movement.

Tell the clinician if you have diabetes, poor circulation, a weakened immune system or no spleen. Antibiotics may be needed.

Tetanus and rabies

Bring your vaccination history if possible. A clinician will decide about tetanus protection.

A bite or scratch abroad, contact with a bat, or an animal suspected of rabies needs immediate assessment. Do not wait for symptoms; preventive treatment may be essential even after previous vaccination.

Useful information

Record the country, date, animal type and any known owner or vaccination details without risking another bite.

Animal / country / date

Last tetanus vaccine, if known

Review and treatment plan

Your clinic and care plan

Healthway Medical Centre
9 Mdina Road, Ħaż-Żebbuġ
ZBG 9015, Malta
+356 2033 1155
Mobile: +356 9952 5356
info@healthwaymalta.com
www.healthwaymalta.com

Mon-Fri 09:00-12:00 & 16:00-20:00
Saturday / public holidays 09:00-14:00
Sundays closed, including public holidays.

For emergencies, call 112. Do not wait for an email or clinic reply.

Medicines / vaccination plan

Follow-up date

Guidance and further reading

NHS: Animal and human bites
World Health Organization: Animal bites
World Health Organization: Rabies: post-exposure prevention
NICE NG184: Animal bites: infection risk and treatment

Approved for publication 30 October 2026. Original illustrations; general information, not an individual diagnosis. Follow advice from your treating team.