

Animal Bite Injuries in Children- An Insight

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“Childhood is the most beautiful of all life seasons” (anonymous author). It should be carefree and a phase of enjoyment. But what happens when your childhood is associated with a tragic incident that will leave a life-long bad imprint in your memories. Animals are an indispensable part of human ecosystem. Behavior of a child in presence of an animal can be variable with some children showing extreme evasive behavior while others show affection. But often incidents of animal bites are heard creating fear and anxiety among children and their caregivers. This paper provides an insight on what is known about this topic in literature regarding who are most at risk and who are more prone to bite!!

According to literature review, younger children between 5 - 9 years especially male child are considered most at risk. Most inflicted area in children less than 5 years is face especially lips, nose and cheek, referred as ‘central target area’. In older children, upper and lower extremities are commonly affected. This variation in affected site is because of small stature and underdeveloped motor skills of younger children. Some breeds (Pit bulls, Rottweilers, bull terriers and German shepherds) are considered more aggressive. Pet and domestic animals have more chances of biting than stray animals. Therefore, before choosing an animal as your pet, consider his aggressive behavior, particularly when you have kids at home. During the unfortunate incident of animal bite injury, most important factors affecting the prognosis are time elapsed since incident and initial care of wound. Risk of infection decreases if victim reports within 24 hours. The ideal treatment protocol should be thorough debridement and irrigation with saline/hydrogen peroxide/povidone-iodine/local anesthetic solution followed by primary closure wherever possible. Some cases may require complex repair and reconstruction or scar revision. There is insufficient evidence regarding effectiveness of prophylactic antibiotics after animal bite injuries. Bites on hand, puncture wounds, in immunocompromised patients and cat bites demand administration of prophylactic antibiotics. Post-exposure rabies and tetanus prophylaxis should be ensured to prevent complications associated with rabies and tetanus. Authorities should work in the direction of reducing the incidence of such injuries. This may be feasible by educational interventions imparted to children and adolescents providing knowledge and appropriate behavior adopted in the event of encounter with an aggressive animal. Ignorance regarding appropriate treatment, its completion and vaccine can have serious implications in future. Raising public awareness about these injuries should help prevention or atleast facilitate more timely intervention [1].

Bibliography

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