

Dog bites are the most common bites, but you can also get bitten by cats, rodents or snakes. And by humans, too. Bites can cause local and general infections, particularly if they are on the hands or arms, or if they affect children under two, people over 50 or people that are ill.

It is important to keep your **vaccination cards** up to date: both your family's and your pets'. Adults and children should all learn how to treat animals, avoid annoying them and avoid contact with unknown animals. In the countryside you should wear proper shoes and be very careful when you move stones or sit down.

What should you do if you get bitten?

Keep calm and get out of the way of the animal or the attacker. Clean the wound as soon as possible, with abundant soap and water, or else with sterile saline solution, for 5 minutes. If you are bleeding, apply pressure to the wound for 10 minutes to stop it. Cover the bite with a sterile dressing. Keep the affected limb raised and keep it still to help reduce the swelling. Apply ice. See your doctor if the bite looks as if it is infected, if you feel unwell, if you suffer from diabetes or a serious illness or if the wound

is deep. Check your anti-tetanus jab is up to date. You don't always need antibiotics: your doctor will decide this.

Snake bites

This is a medical emergency. Seek help and try to get to the nearest hospital as quickly as possible. Most snakes in Catalonia are not poisonous, but a few, like the adder, certainly are. Try to identify the species or at least be able to describe it. The common snake, or *culebra*, is NOT poisonous and leaves a U-shape bite mark. The adder, which IS poisonous, leaves the marks of its fangs.

In this case, keep the affected area in the lowest possible position with respect to the rest of the body. Do not apply cold or heat. Do not make a tourniquet unless you know that hospital care is over an hour away and the species has been identified as very dangerous. Write down the time when the tourniquet was put on. A tourniquet is only useful if it is made in the first 15-20 minutes. It should not be too tight and should be loosened every 15 minutes. It cannot be left on for more than 2-3 hours. Never cut the bite open or suck it.

Rabies

The rabies vaccine is compulsory for all dogs throughout Spain, except in Galicia, the Basque Country and Catalonia. At present, there is no rabies in Spain (except in Ceuta and Melilla). If you are bitten by a duly vaccinated pet dog, it is almost impossible to catch the disease. However, you can catch it if you are bitten by an unvaccinated or wild dog.

If the dog can be located, it will be kept under veterinary observation for 10 days and the victim will be given preventive treatment. If the dog has run away, your doctor will decide if preventive treatment is necessary.

