

Section: Division of Nursing  
Approval: \_\_\_\_\_  
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\* **PROTOCOL** \*  
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HACKETTSTOWN REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

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**ED**  
(Scope)

**TITLE: ALTERATION IN SKIN INTEGRITY FROM ANIMAL BITES**

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PURPOSE: To outline care and treatment of ED patients with animal bites and to outline rabies considerations.

LEVEL:   x   Interdependent        Independent        Dependent

SUPPORTIVE DATA: Puncture wounds or lacerations from animal bites are usually not closed due to the great potential for infection. Dogs and cats should be considered individually. Wild animals (skunks, bats, foxes, coyotes, raccoons, bobcats and other carnivores) are regarded as rabid unless proven negative. If available, the animal should be killed and tested by the state lab ASAP.

NOTE: The NJ Department of Health number for rabies information is (609) 292-7300. At night, call (609) 392-2020.

CONTENT:        **STEPS**        **KEY POINTS**

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| History             | 1. Ascertain history of bite: Was the animal exhibiting unusual behavior? Was the attack unprovoked? Is the animal now in captivity? Has it had its rabies immunizations? Have the police been notified? Where did the incident occur? Was any other person involved? |
| Assessment          | 2. What has been done by pre-hospital care providers?<br>3. Assess wound for integumentary status, color, temperature, sensation and hygiene.<br>4. Musculoskeletal status: Muscle strength or weakness, ROM or mobility, size and shape of skin disruption.          |
| Asepsis             | 5. Patient will be soaked in betadine scrub/water and normal saline in appropriate size basin. If area does not lend itself to soaking, scrub with betadine sponge and brush for at least 15 minutes.   |
| Control of Bleeding | 6. Pressure will be applied with sterile bulky dressings.   |
| Wound Closure       | 7. Puncture wounds caused by animals should not be closed. They will be cleansed, debrided and loosely approximated with steristrips or loose sutures if necessary.<br>8. Lacerations may be sutured after meticulous cleansing. Assist with all procedures.          |

STEPS

KEY POINTS

9. ED physician will use disposable suture set, sterile gloves and local anesthesia with a 25 gauge needle for infiltration. Suture sets are not reusable.
- Dressings 10. Apply ointment and dry, sterile dressing telfa; adaptic or xeroform will be used when appropriate.
- Medications 11. Obtain tetanus history and administer as ordered. Obtain antibiotic history and administer as ordered.
- Incubation 12. Incubation of rabies in humans is usually 1-2 months but may be as long as 1 year. Rabies should be considered in patients who exhibit unusual behavior, who have a diagnosis of encephalitis and who have difficulty swallowing.
- DOCUMENTATION: 1. Chart to protocol.  
2. Chart to any changes to protocol.  
3. Patient reaction to treatment.  
4. Patient instructions and disposition.
- Reference: Lippincott Manual of Nursing Practice, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition. 2006.