

Cat bite abscesses

Overview

- Has your cat been fighting? Do they seem a bit 'under the weather'?
- If they've been bitten or scratched, it's possible that they might have a painful cat bite abscess forming.
- Cat bite abscesses are most common on the tail, top of the head, legs, face and neck.
- Although it's rare, cat bites and scratches can also put your cat at risk of diseases such as FeLV/FIV.
- Contact your vet for advice if you think your cat has an abscess.

General information

Teeth and claws are covered in nasty bacteria, so bites and scratches very often lead to painful infections or abscesses. Although rare, bites and scratches can also spread diseases such as [Feline Immunodeficiency Virus \(FIV\)](#) and [Feline Leukaemia Virus \(FeLV\)](#).

Cat bites and scratches can also cause nasty infections in people, so always seek [medical advice from your doctor](#) if you have been bitten or badly scratched by a cat.



Symptoms

It often takes two - four days for an abscess to develop, so before you see a swelling, you may notice other symptoms such as:

- [A reduced appetite](#)
- [Low energy \(lethargy\)](#)
- [Fever](#) - they may feel hot to touch (especially their ears and paws)

Symptoms of an abscess include:

- Swelling
- Redness
- Wounds (bite marks/a large wound if the abscess has burst)
- A floppy tail – common if the tail base has been bitten
- [Limping](#) – ranging from mild to severe
- Pain - (being quiet, aggressive, repeatedly licking one area, growling, twitching or not letting you near them)

When to contact your vet

Always contact your vet for advice if your cat has symptoms of a cat bite abscess or seems unwell.

Treatment

Treatment may include:

- **Lancing the abscess** to release pus
- [Anti-inflammatories](#) (to reduce pain and inflammation)
- [Antibiotics](#) for the infection (**not always necessary - your vet will advise**)
- **Cleaning** - it's likely that your vet will ask you to clean your cat's wound twice daily using a salt water and cotton wool (see image below)



Outlook

If your vet is able to drain the abscess, your cat will immediately feel more comfortable. Then, if you keep the area clean, the infection should start to clear and fully heal within a week or so. Contact your vet if your cat seems unwell during this time, or their abscess doesn't seem to be healing.

Prevention

Neutering is the best way to prevent fights and cat bite abscesses. Neutered cats are less likely to roam and fight - for more information, read our [guide to neutering](#) and [preventing cat fights](#).

Are cat bites and scratches dangerous to people?

Yes, cat bites and scratches can cause serious infections in humans if they break the skin. If you have been bitten or badly scratched, seek advice from your doctor/refer to the [NHS website](#).

Cost

Treatment for a cat bite abscess can be an unexpected cost at any point throughout your cat's life. Consider [insuring your cat](#) as soon as you get them, before any problems develop. This will ensure you have all the support you need to care for them.

Am I eligible for PDSA veterinary treatment?

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