

## Cat bite abscesses

### Overview

- Has your cat been fighting? Do they seem a bit 'under the weather'?
- Cat bites often lead to painful infections and abscesses.
- Cat bite abscesses cause a range of symptoms and are typically found on the top of the head, tail, legs, face and neck.
- Book an appointment with your vet if you think your cat has an abscess.
- It's important to try and prevent cat bites, because they put your cat at risk of developing other diseases.

### General information



This cat has a large, open abscess on the side of his face.

Cats' teeth and claws are covered in nasty bacteria, so if your cat gets bitten or scratched they are very likely to develop an infection or an abscess under the skin (cat bite abscess).

Although it's rare, cat bites can also spread diseases such as Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) and Feline Leukaemia Virus (FeLV) so

for this reason, it's very important to have your cat neutered and keep up to date with their vaccinations.

**Cat bites and scratches can sometimes cause very serious infections in people. 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 at the site
- Redness around the site
- Heat
- Wounds (bite marks, or 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

Contact your vet if your cat seems unwell or has symptoms of a cat bite abscess. Don't wait to see if he/she gets better, this could result in the problem becoming much worse.

**You know your cat best; contact your vet if you are concerned.**

## Treatment

Treatment will depend on how your cat is in him/herself and the severity of their wound. Treatment may include:

- **Lancing the abscess** - your vet may decide to lance (open) your cat's abscess and release the pus from inside.
- **Anti-inflammatory pain relief** - to reduce pain and inflammation.
- **Antibiotics**- antibiotics to kill bacteria, though they aren't always necessary. Your vet will advise.
- **Cleaning the wound** - you will need to keep your cat's wound clean. A saltwater bath, twice daily is usually enough (see image below).



## Outlook

If your vet can drain the pus from your cat's abscess, he/she will immediately feel more comfortable. Then if you keep the area clean, the infection should start to clear and fully heal within a few days.

week or so. Contact your vet if the abscess isn't improving or you are worried.

## Prevention

The best way to prevent cat bite abscesses is to stop your cat fighting. The most effective way to do this is by having them neutered. Neutered cats are much less likely to roam and fight. For more information read our guide on 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.

**Find out whether you are eligible for free or low cost PDSA veterinary treatment using our checker below or visit [www.pdsa.org.uk/eligibility](http://www.pdsa.org.uk/eligibility)**

Published: Feb 2020