

Physiotherapy Department

# Patient advice leaflet following a bite injury



Bites to the hand are common and can cause pain and stiffness. The saliva of an animal or human mouth contains bacteria which can contaminate your wound.

## Symptoms

If this happens you may experience some or all of the following symptoms:

- pain
- swelling
- redness
- heat
- pus draining from the wound
- fever or chills
- altered sensation at the wound site and surrounding area
- stiffness in the hand and wrist

You should check your hand regularly for these signs during the first few weeks after the bite and contact your GP if you are concerned.

## Treatment to expect

After receiving a bite to the hand you may require further treatment to help your hand recover. This can include a review with a specialist team and a possible hospital stay for antibiotics and monitoring of the wound.

## Swelling

After a bite to the hand you are most likely to experience swelling. To help minimise this swelling and any associated pain and stiffness keep your hand elevated (held up) above the level of your heart.

You can also help by practicing pumping exercises ten times every hour. You can do these by repeatedly reaching your hand up to the ceiling and then back down to your elevated position.

## Exercise

It is important you start to exercise your hand as soon as possible. At first your hand may feel stiff and painful but it is important that you continue to move it as this will help your recovery. By exercising and regaining normal movement, alongside your medical management, the feeling of pain and stiffness will gradually improve. We suggest you use the pain relief medications you have been prescribed so that you can perform the exercises more comfortably.

These exercises are most effective when performed regularly. We recommend practicing them five to ten times every half an hour.

## **Thumb Opposition**

Reach the tip of your thumb across your palm and touch the bottom of your little finger.



## **Thumb Extension**

Stretch your thumb back and away from your palm.



## **Flat Fist**

Reach your fingertips towards the bottom of your palm.



## **Duck Beak**

From a flat hand bend your fingers at your knuckle joints while keeping the other finger joints straight. Return to start position.



## **Finger Extensions**

With your hand flat on the table keep your fingers straight and lift them all up and away from the table.



## **Full Fist**

Curl all of your fingers into a fist



## **Hook Grip**

Curl your fingers down so that their tips touch the pads of your palm



Contact details:

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If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

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