

FIRST AID FOR AN OPEN WOUND

What is a wound?

A wound is an injury causing damage to the skin and often underlying tissues. It can be open (e.g. a cut) or closed (e.g. a bruise).

What should I do if a wound is bleeding?

Try to stop initial bleeding by applying pressure to the wound with an adsorbent dressing such as dry gauze, followed by a layer of bandage such as elastoplast or clean dry linen. This will protect the wound during transport to a vet and prevent any further contamination of the injury.

If possible, try to raise the affected area.

Do not apply ointments or any other chemicals to the wound, as they can interfere with its eventual healing. In particular do not apply antiseptics such as Dettol, TCP or Savlon. If you apply these it may not be possible to suture the wound.

Why leave a wound open?

Most open wounds will be contaminated with bacteria after several hours and can often contain other foreign material such as dirt, grit or hair. If possible, your veterinary surgeon will try to clean this wound and repair it, either immediately or after several days, depending on its size and degree of contamination.

When the wound is old (i.e. 12 hours or longer) or grossly infected (e.g. a cat or dog bite), it will often be left to heal without stitching using a combination of repeated bathing, bandaging and antibiotic therapy. In the cases mentioned above, this treatment combination is the way to promote a speedy recovery of your cat's injury.

How should I manage an open wound at home?

As instructed by your vet, bathing the wound, 2-3 times daily, with a mild antiseptic solution such as warm salted water (approximately 1 teaspoon to 1 pint), will help to remove any crusted discharge and keep wound edges clean.

Bandaging daily, as demonstrated by your vet, may also be required if there is a lot of discharge from the wound and/or to prevent your cat from excessively licking the area.

Is any other medication required?

Sometimes your cat will be prescribed a course of antibiotics if the wound is very infected, but no other topical treatments should be used, unless directed by your vet, as some chemicals can damage tissues and delay wound healing.