Protocol

Human Bites and Scratches

Protocol:
The school nurse should be informed if there is a biting/scratching incident at school in which the skin is broken. The biter/scratcher and the victim of these incidents will be referred to their health care providers on a case by case basis dependent on the guidelines listed below.

Human bites are very common among young children, but usually do not cause serious injury. Saliva without visible blood poses no real health risk for the transmission of HIV or Hepatitis C, and Hepatitis B poses a very rare risk.

Children or adults who are involved in a biting incident may be exposed to bloodborne pathogens if the bite breaks the skin. In these situations, the person who was bitten is considered the "source" of the blood exposure because blood from the victim may enter the biter's mouth.

If a child bites another child and both children have completed the Hepatitis B vaccine series, laboratory testing is not required. The risk of HIV transmission is considered negligible, and the incidence of Hepatitis C in children is very low. Both children should be referred to their healthcare providers for any additional recommendations or follow-up.

If a child bites an adult who is a UCPS employee, the employee should be referred to Occupational Medicine (Occ Med), and the child should be referred to their healthcare provider for further recommendations. It is not necessary for the student identified as the biter to have laboratory testing performed, as the individual who was bitten is considered the source person in the blood exposure incident.

Scratches that draw blood are not considered an exchange of body fluids unless the child that did the scratching had open wounds or blood under his nails, or unless mucous membranes were exposed to the blood.

If clothing covers a bite/scratch where the skin is broken, an exposure of body fluids should not be considered.

Management Guidelines for Treating Human Bites/Scratches:

1. If skin is broken in the case of biting/scratching, the wound should be cleansed as soon as possible with soap and water. Apply ice if swelling occurs.
2. For bites, if the person who was bitten is a staff member, they should be referred to Occ Med for an evaluation. If the person who did the biting is a child, baseline laboratory tests are not required, but they should be referred to their health care provider for any further recommendations.
3. Scratches do not constitute an exchange of body fluids unless the scratcher has open wounds or bleeding from the fingers or hands. If a staff member who was scratched prefers to have blood drawn as a precaution, they will be referred to OccMed for testing.

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Date

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