Introduction
This leaflet tells you how to deal with an animal or human bite. If you have any questions please ask a member of staff. Also, at the end of this patient information leaflet you will see a number of useful contact details for extra information.

What to do if you have been bitten
We encourage you to seek medical advice immediately and clean the wound, no matter how small the cut to the skin. Cleaning will reduce the chance of infection. Use tap water as antiseptics may damage skin tissue and delay healing.

Treatment
Wounds will be treated in the following ways:

- large, deep or dirty are best cleaned and assessed by a nurse or doctor
- gaping (open) wounds may need closing but may not be stitched due to the risk of infection
- paper strips or steri-strips will be used to help support and keep the wound closed
- if the wound is more than 12 hours old, it may not be steri-stripped as it may already be infected. A sterile dressing will be used to protect the wound and this must be kept dry and clean at all times
- if the arm is affected, a sling may be recommended to reduce the risk of swelling.

Antibiotics and tetanus
All wounds will be treated with a course of antibiotics as there is a high risk of developing an infection, for example, due to bacteria from saliva.

We recommend follow-up care, either from the emergency department or your GP, to check wound healing, monitor infection and change the dressing.

Depending on your tetanus status we may give you a booster. This is usually repeated every 10 years but, once you have been given a course (normally in childhood) and two follow-up boosters, this should cover you for life.
Warning signs
If any of the following symptoms develop or get worse, visit the emergency department, your GP or a walk-in centre:

- the wound becomes more tender (sensitive), painful, swollen or inflamed (red)
- you feel generally unwell with a fever or tiredness or have other worrying symptoms within one week or so after the bite. Rarely, some bacteria can get into the bloodstream via the wound

Useful emergency contact details:

St Mary's Hospital's emergency department
South Wharf Road
London W2 1NY
Telephone: 020 3312 6330

Charing Cross Hospital's emergency department
Fulham Palace Road
London W6 8RF
Telephone: 020 3311 1005

Eye emergencies (24-hour)
Western Eye Hospital
171 Marylebone Road
London NW1 5YE
Telephone: 020 3312 3241

NHS 111
This 24-hour telephone service puts you in touch with a team of nurses and health information staff for confidential healthcare advice.

Domestic violence
24-hour helpline
Telephone: 0808 2000 247

Alcohol liaison nurses
Charing Cross and Hammersmith
Telephone: 020 3313 0244
St Mary’s Hospital
Telephone: 020 3312 7663

Drinkline
24-hour helpline
Telephone: 0800 917 8282
Pharmacies and emergency dental services NHS
Telephone: 111

Sexual Health Clinic
Jefferiss wing
St Mary’s Hospital
Praed Street
London W2 1NY
Telephone: 020 3312 1697 (general enquiries)
020 3312 7583 (sexual health and HIV advice)

How do I make a comment about my visit?
We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any suggestions or comments about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (PALS) on 020 3313 0088 (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte’s & Chelsea hospitals), or 020 3312 7777 (St Mary’s and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at pals@imperial.nhs.uk. The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to express your concerns in writing to:
Complaints department
Fourth floor
Salton House
St Mary’s Hospital
Praed Street
London W2 1NY

Alternative formats
This leaflet can be provided on request in large print, as a sound recording, in Braille, or in alternative languages. Please contact the communications team on 020 3312 5592.

Wi-fi
We have a free and premium wi-fi service at each of our five hospitals. Look for WiFiSPARK_FREE or WiFiSPARK_PREMIUM