



## Skin Abscess

### Diagnostic Plan

History  
Physical examination  
Abscess culture  
X-rays

### Therapeutic Plan

Hot compresses  
Abscess drainage  
Dead tissue removal  
Antibacterial therapy  
Surgery

### Nutritional Plan

Nutrition adequate for tissue repair.

## Skin Abscess

Your pet has a skin abscess. Abscesses are localized collections of pus in a cavity. Skin abscesses are treated by draining the pocket of pus, removing dead tissue and giving antibiotics. This client education sheet will help you learn more about skin abscesses and will review your veterinarian's instructions for your pet's care at home, as well as follow-up with the veterinary health care team.

### What You Should Know About Skin Abscess

One function of the skin is to protect the body from bacteria in the environment. Puncture wounds often introduce bacteria beneath the skin. The bacteria thrive in this ideal environment because the puncture wound closes and no drainage occurs. The body responds to the bacterial infection by sending white blood cells to the site and by attempting to contain the infection with fibrous tissue. An abscess, or cavity of pus, is the outcome of the infection and the body's response to the infection. Abscesses can occur in both dogs and cats, but are probably more common in cats.

### Causes

Abscesses develop when bacteria gain entrance to the body. Puncture wounds caused by animal bites, especially in cats, are the most common cause. Puncture wounds are also caused by small foreign bodies such as grass awns (grass seeds, cheat grass or foxtail) and wood, which carry bacteria through the surface of the skin.

### Diagnosis

Your veterinarian will perform a physical examination to determine if an abscess is present. Frequently, puncture wounds can be found at or above the site of the abscess. Bacterial culture and sensitivity studies may be performed to determine the type of bacteria involved and the antibiotics needed to treat the infection. Other diagnostic tests such as X-rays may be necessary to determine whether foreign bodies are present.

### Treatment and Home Care

Your veterinarian may use hot compresses to enhance the development of the abscess so he or she can find the proper spot to open and drain it. Your pet will be anesthetized while the abscess is treated. After the abscess is drained, your

veterinarian will gently explore the abscess cavity, flush it with antiseptic solutions, remove dead and dying tissue, and prescribe antibiotics to be given.

If your pet has a large abscess, your veterinarian may pack the cavity with moistened, medicated gauze for two or three days. These packs should be changed at least once a day, so your pet may need to be hospitalized. Drainage is sometimes enhanced by placing a thin-walled rubber tube in the abscess cavity. Foreign bodies that cause abscesses will need to be removed by surgery.

Home care consists of checking the abscess two or three times daily to make sure the swelling doesn't return. If your veterinarian places a rubber tube in the abscess to enhance drainage, you will need to make sure your pet doesn't remove the tube by chewing. If this happens you should see your veterinarian. He or she may place a special collar on your pet's neck to prevent tube removal. Give all prescribed medications as directed by your veterinarian. If you can't give your pet these medications, or if your pet doesn't eat or becomes depressed, call your veterinarian. Rechecks may be necessary according to your veterinarian's instructions.

Surgical neutering, especially castration of male animals, has been shown to decrease aggression and fighting. If your pet is not already neutered, you should consider this elective procedure as an aid in preventing bite wounds in the future.

### Nutritional Plan

Your veterinarian may give you special feeding instructions while your pet's abscess heals. Surgical patients may benefit from foods with increased levels of protein and energy during the recovery process. Such foods include Hill's® Prescription Diet® i/d® Canine and i/d® Feline Gastrointestinal Health.

After your pet's abscess heals, your veterinarian may suggest a dietary change based on your pet's age and body condition, and on the presence or absence of disease in other organs and body systems. Optimal nutrition provides for a pet's needs based on age and activity level, but more importantly, reduces the health risks associated with feeding excess sodium, calcium, phosphorus, protein and calories. Foods that avoid these harmful excesses and provide proper nutrition for each life stage include Hill's® Science Diet® brand pet foods.

### Transitioning Food

Unless recommended otherwise by your veterinarian, gradually introduce any new food over a seven-day period. Mix the new food with your pet's former food, gradually increasing its proportion until only the new food is fed.

If your pet is one of the few that doesn't readily accept a new food, try warming the canned food to body temperature, hand feeding for the first few days, or mixing the dry food with warm water (wait ten minutes before serving). Feed only the recommended food. Be patient but firm with your pet. This is important because the success or failure of treatment depends to a large degree on strict adherence to the new food.

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## Home Care Instructions

Client's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Patient's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Medication(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Nutritional Recommendation: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-Up Appointment: \_\_\_\_\_

(Hospital Stamp Area Above)

REGULAR VISITS WILL HELP OUR VETERINARY HEALTH CARE TEAM PROVIDE FOR YOUR PET'S BEST INTEREST.