



ABOUT THE DISEASE

An abscess is an accumulation of inflammatory and infectious liquids within the body, but most typically under the skin as a result of bacterial contamination. Depending on the cause of an abscess, it is often typical for the skin to balloon and degenerate overlying the abscess, which results in the drainage of malodorous material.

Most commonly abscesses develop as a result of bite or puncture wounds through the skin. However, other types of abscesses exist depending on their cause or location, such as tooth root abscess or anal gland abscess.

For additional information on these specific types of abscesses, please refer to our resources on [Tooth Root Abscess](#) and [Anal Gland Disease](#) for more information.

OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

A diagnosis is most often made following a physical examination performed by a veterinarian.

If the abscess is closed, a fine needle aspirate with cytology or blood work can often identify the presence of an abscess.

Depending on the severity of infection, the patient might have a swab of the wound taken so that a reference laboratory can identify ideal choices in antibiotics (culture & sensitivity).

TREATMENT

Most often, patients will require anti-inflammatories, pain medications, and antibiotics to help manage the disease. But it should be mentioned that antibiotic use only aids the immune system's efforts in clearing an infection. Antibiotics do not replace the need for a competent immune system. Antibiotics are not a replacement for proper abscess and wound management.

If an abscess has not ruptured, veterinarians will most often advise that the abscess is lanced open so that it can be flushed and drained in accordance with standards of wound management. Depending on the size of the wound, patient compliance, and discomfort to patient, it is often advised that patients are sedated for this procedure. In more extreme cases, a veterinarian may advise the placement of a drain-tube to allow a longer time for wound management.

If an abscess has already ruptured, the site will often still require local wound management including clipping the area free of all hair and cleaning to reduce ongoing skin contamination. As before, depending on several variables, patients may require sedation.

Once discharged home, they must have an Elizabethan collar (e-collar) to prevent licking and further contamination of the wound site(s). Please follow any additional care instructions provided by the veterinarian and medical support team.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Have any skin swelling or lesion evaluated by a veterinarian as soon as possible for proper management
- Give all medications at recommended times and durations, as prescribed by the veterinarian
- Proper wound management and cleaning is just (if not more) important as antibiotics and anti-inflammatories.