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ANIMAL BITES/INSECT BITES AND STINGS:

Animal Bites (Dog and Cat):

Cat and Dog bites are always a concern and generally should be treated with antibiotic pills + a topical dressing if large enough to require one.

- Wash with soap and water
- Apply topical antibiotic (Bacitracin...is the preferred over-the counter topical antibiotic)
- Cover loosely
- Call for antibiotics

Of course, if the bit or scratch is more severe, it is best to be seen in the emergency room.

Scorpion Stings:

Welcome to Arizona. This is one of our 'special creatures' that we all run into from time to time. It's a right of passage to have a Scorpion bite, and fortunately, this is not a worry in 99% of cases in adults. There have been no deaths from scorpion bites in Arizona in the past 20 years.

The sting can be witnessed or presumed and is usual an intense burning pain on the skin, typically the hand or foot most commonly, as the scorpion is hidden and disturbed by movement of a limb, stinging as a reflexive response.

Mildly severe stings can be associated with tingling sensations in the affected limb or the local area. Sometimes this can spread up the arm or leg a short ways and even be felt slightly in the opposite limb of back. Such mild symptoms are not cause for concern and do not require any treatment.

Pain will increase over a 2-6 hour period and then subside. Treatment is purely symptomatic using pain medication (Tylenol, Aspirin, Advil/Aleve) or stronger pills are fine if you happen to have a left-over pain medication in the cupboard.

You can use Benedryl or another antihistamine if you like, but this is probably not helpful unless there is itching and an allergic-type reaction developing. It will not help resolve the scorpion sting faster.

Topical treatment does not have any specific role, but you may apply ice to the area to reduce spread of the venom as well as to provide some topical relief.

Spider Bites:

Although feared more than other stings/bites, because of the concern of a necrotizing skin injury (death of tissue at the site of the bite). These are very uncommon and only rarely seen. They are more feared than truly a concern.

Spider bites usually appear much as a bee sting with an immediate red and swollen area that is painful. This can last for hours to days (up to 10 days) but they generally resolve without any worrisome complications (98%+ of the time).

Treatment is purely symptomatic. Applying ice can ease the pain, as can Tylenol, Aspirin, or Advil/Aleve. In addition, Benedryl can be tried if there is surrounding itching.

Many skin lesions that are noted are reported as spider bites, but this is rarely the case. Unless the bite is witnessed, the claim of a spider bite is suspect and uncertain.

If there are multiple bites reported, or bites in various locations then this is almost certainly not due to spider bites. True spider bites occur as single lesions in virtually 100% of cases.

Recluse Spider bites and Black Widow bites are the most feared.

- Recluse bites, if witnessed, are a concern. They can become necrotic, but this takes several days and does not occur within hours of the bite. Observation is the key approach initially, with supportive treatment in the E.R. if symptoms become worrisome.
- Black Widow bites appear quite unremarkable, most often with a blanching (whitens) of the skin in the location of the bite. Systemic symptoms develop after about 40 minutes later with muscle spasms and pain, in the bitten limb or more generally, being the most common symptom.

Treatment for all spider bites is the same:

- Wash the local area of the bite with soap and water
- Take pain medications if needed (Tylenol/Aspirin/Advil)
- Take Benedryl if itching occurs

Observe for other symptoms, but the likelihood of this is remote.

Bee/Wasp/Hornet Stings:

Typically, these stings are witnessed, but sometimes one has to presume that this is the type of sting received. The vast majority of the time there is an acute pain and redness that develops over 15-30 minutes, and then it resolves over 4-6 hours.

Topical treatment should include:

Remove the stinger if still present

Ice the area for pain relief

Tylenol/Aspirin/Aleve/Advil can be used for pain relief, in solid doses (see proper use of these medications pages????)

You can consider additional measures including an antihistamine such as Benedryl, Claritin, Zyrtec, or Allegra. This will prevent itching and irritation from developing as the result of the sting.

Rarely, infection can occur from such a sting and should only be considered if the area remains hot, red, and warm for over a day and progressively increased with time. If that is the case, you should be seen to get an antibiotic prescribed.

Snake bites:

Are you kidding? Don't look into the book for advice...go to the E.R.