

## OTHER TIPS THAT MAY PREVENT OR STOP A DOG ATTACK

- **Don't run past a dog.** Dogs naturally love to chase and catch things. Don't give them a reason to become excited or aggressive.
- **Never disturb a dog** that's caring for puppies, sleeping or eating.
- **Never reach through or over a fence to pet a dog.** Dogs can be protective of their territory, and may interpret your action as a threat.
- **If a dog approaches to sniff you, stay still.** In most cases, the dog will go away when it determines you are not a threat.
- **If you are threatened by a dog, remain calm.** Don't scream or yell. If you say anything, speak calmly and firmly. Avoid eye contact. Try to stay still until the dog leaves, or back away slowly until the dog is out of sight. Don't turn and run.
- **If you fall or are knocked to the ground, curl into a ball** with your hands over your head and neck. Protect your face.

## IF YOU ARE BITTEN:

### If your own dog bit you,

confine it immediately and check your dog's vaccination status. Seek medical attention for the bite. Consult with your veterinarian about your dog's action. Your veterinarian can examine your dog to make sure it is healthy, and can help you with information or training that may prevent future bites.

### If someone else's dog bit you,

first seek medical treatment for your wound. Contact authorities and tell them everything you can about the dog: the owner's name, if you know it; the color and size of the dog; where you encountered the dog; and if, where, and when you've seen it before. These details may help animal control officers locate the dog. In addition, consider asking your physician if post-exposure rabies prophylaxis is necessary.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY DOG BITES SOMEONE?

Even if the bite can be explained (e.g., someone stepped on your dog's tail), it's important to take responsibility for your dog's actions by taking these steps:

- **Restrain the dog immediately.** Separate the dog from the scene of the attack and confine him/her.
- **Check on the victim's condition.** Wash wounds with soap and water. Professional medical advice should be sought to evaluate bite wounds and the risk of rabies or other infections. Call 911 if a response by paramedics is required.
- **Provide important information** including your name, address and information about your dog's most recent rabies vaccination. Local ordinances determine what will happen to your dog if his/her rabies vaccine is out of date.
- **Comply with local ordinances** regarding reporting of dog bites.
- **Consult your veterinarian** for advice about dog behavior that will help prevent similar problems in the future.

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# DOG BITE PREVENTION

*Brought to you by your veterinarian  
and the American Veterinary Medical Association*



# ANY DOG CAN BITE

Even the cuddliest, fuzziest, sweetest pup can bite if provoked. Most people are bitten by their own dog or one they know. Some owners actually promote aggression in their dogs or allow aggression to go unchecked.

From nips to bites to actual attacks, dog bites are a serious problem. Dog bite victims requiring medical attention in the United States number approximately 800,000 annually; at least half of them are children. Countless more bite injuries go untreated. Fortunately, there are steps we can take to address this problem.

## WHO'S BEING BITTEN?

The number of recorded dog bite injuries is significantly higher in children than adults. The elderly and home service providers such as mail carriers and meter readers are also high on the list of frequent dog bite victims.

## WHAT'S A DOG OWNER TO DO?

Although media reports and rumors often give the impression that certain breeds of dog are more likely to bite, there is little scientific evidence to support those claims. It is more important to focus on things that we know increase the chance of a bite occurring.

**Carefully select your pet.** Don't get a puppy on impulse. Before and after selection, your veterinarian is your best source for information about behavior, health and suitability.

**Socialize your pet** so he/she feels at ease around people and other animals. Gradually expose your puppy to a variety of situations under controlled circumstances; continue that exposure on a regular basis as your dog gets older. Don't put your dog in a position where he/she feels threatened or teased.

**Take extra care with young children.** If you have a dog and young children, always supervise their interaction with dogs, including your own dogs. Carefully manage the introduction of a child or a new dog to your household. Consider delaying acquiring a new dog until your children are over the age of four.

**Train your dog.** The basic commands "sit," "stay," "no," and "come" can be incorporated into fun activities that build

a bond of obedience and trust between pets and people. Avoid highly excitable games like wrestling or tug-of-war. Use a leash in public to ensure you are able to control your dog.

**Keep your dog healthy.** Have your dog vaccinated against rabies and preventable infectious diseases. Parasite control and overall health care are important because how your dog feels directly affects how it behaves. Dogs in pain are more likely to bite, so have painful conditions such as arthritis, or injuries addressed by your veterinarian.

**Be a responsible pet owner.** Obey leash laws. If you have a fenced yard, make sure the gates are secure. Walk and exercise your dog regularly to keep him/her healthy and provide mental stimulation. Studies of dog bite events suggest that it may be beneficial to spay or neuter your dog; discuss these procedures with your veterinarian.

**Be alert.** Recognize when your dog is stressed, uncomfortable, or showing signs of aggression, and be prepared to prevent escalation of the situation. Remove your dog from situations that could increase the risk of biting. If your dog shows signs of fear or aggression that seem unprovoked or potentially dangerous, consult a veterinarian to determine the cause and seek treatment.

## HOW CAN MY FAMILY AND I AVOID BEING BITTEN?

Be cautious around strange dogs and treat your own pet with respect. Because children are the most common victims of dog bites, parents and caregivers should:

- Never leave a baby or small child alone with a dog.
- Be alert for potentially dangerous situations, and take measures to prevent or stop them from escalating.
- Teach children – including toddlers – to be careful around and respectful of pets.
- Teach children not to approach strange dogs or try to pet dogs by reaching through fences.
- Teach your children to ask permission from the dog's owner before petting any dog.



**Always supervise your child's interaction with dogs, including your own dogs.**

**Dogs naturally love to chase and catch things. Don't give them a reason to become excited or aggressive.**

