

# Dog Bite Prevention

## Did you know that ...

- 4.7 million people in this country are bitten by dogs every year
- children are by far the most common victims
- 800,000 Americans receive medical attention for dog bites each year
- children are far more likely to be severely injured; approximately 400,000 receive medical attention every year
- most dog bites affecting young children occur during everyday activities and while interacting with familiar dogs
- senior citizens are the second most common dog bite victims

There are a number of things that you can do to avoid dog bites, ranging from properly training and socializing your pet to educating your children on how, or if, they should approach a dog. Information is one of the best cures for this public health crisis.

## What's a dog owner to do?

- Carefully select your pet. Puppies should not be obtained on impulse.
- Make sure your pet is socialized as a young puppy so it feels at ease around people and other animals.
- Don't put your dog in a position where it feels threatened or teased.
- Train your dog. The basic commands "sit," "stay," "no," and "come" help dogs understand what is expected of them and can be incorporated into fun activities that build a bond of trust between pets and people.
- Walk and exercise your dog regularly to keep it healthy and provide mental stimulation.
- 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 other health care are important because how your dog feels affects how it behaves.
- Neuter your pet.
- If you have a fenced yard, make sure the gates are secure.

## How can you protect your family?

- 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.
- Teach their children – including toddlers – to be careful around pets. Children must learn not to approach strange dogs or try to pet dogs through fences. Teach children to ask permission from the dog's owner before petting the dog.

## Useful Links

The following AVMA resources can help you learn more:

### Dog Bite Emergencies

If you are bitten by a dog, here is a checklist of things you should do:

- If the dog's owner is present, request proof of rabies vaccination, and get the owner's name and contact information.
- Clean bite wound with soap and water as soon as possible.
- Consult your doctor immediately or go to the emergency room if it's after office hours.
- Contact the dog's veterinarian to check vaccination records.

### [What you should know about dog bite prevention brochure](#)

This informative brochure offers tips on how to avoid being bitten, as well as what to do if you are bitten by a dog. It also addresses what you need to do if your dog bites someone.

### [A community approach to dog bite prevention](#) (PDF)

The American Veterinary Medical Association Task Force on Canine Aggression and Human-Canine Interactions has produced this report intended to help state and local leaders develop effective dog bite prevention programs in their communities.

### [The Blue Dog Parent Guide and CD](#)

This innovative dog bite prevention program is designed to help parents and children safely interact with dogs both inside and outside their home. The program is geared toward children from 3 to 6 years old. It's the only dog bite educational tool scientifically proven to help young children learn behaviors that can keep them safe.



### [Bilingual Dog Bite Prevention activity/coloring book](#)

Teach children about different ways to avoid dog bites, by educating them on how, or if, they should approach a dog. A creative tool for use all year, including during Dog Bite Prevention week in May.

### [Dog bite prevention channel on AVMA-TV](#)

Informative videos designed to educate children are available on AVMA-TV.org. The list of webcast videos available include: Overview of Dog Bite Prevention, Ask Before You Pet a Dog, Don't Run Around Dogs, Respect a Dog's Territory, and Safety Tips for Dog Bite Prevention.

### [What you should know about rabies](#)

Rabies is a deadly disease that is transmitted to people through a bite. It is transmitted through the rabid animal's saliva. Rabies vaccinations for dogs are an excellent defense against this disease, as many times families are exposed to rabies after an unvaccinated pet dog is bitten by a rabid wild animal. This brochure educates on how to prevent rabies.

These other websites also have information that can help prevent dog bites:

[American Academy of Pediatrics – A Lesson in Dog Safety Can Help Prevent Bites](#)

[United States Postal Service – Dog Bite Awareness](#)

[American Society of Plastic Surgeons – Dog Bite Information](#)

[American Society of Maxillofacial Surgeons](#)

[American Society for Reconstructive Microsurgery](#)