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Dog Bite Prevention



Dogs are wonderful companions and they do provide love and comfort to countless numbers of pet lovers. The vast majority of dogs are lovable and adorable but even the cuddliest, fuzziest, sweetest pup can bite if provoked.

From nips to bites to actual attacks, dog bites are a serious health problem in the United States considering;

- More than 4.7 million people are bitten each year. Countless more bites go unreported and untreated.
- According to the Western Insurance Information Service, the insurance industry paid out more than \$1 billion in dog-bite claims in 1998 alone. According to the Insurance Information Institute, dog bites accounted for about one-quarter of all

claims on homeowner's insurance, costing more than \$321 million in 2003.

- 70 percent of dog bite victims are children – an estimated 3.3 million children under the age of 10. The elderly and home service people like mail carriers and meter readers also are high on the list of frequent dog bite victims.
- 40 percent of American dog owners acquired pets primarily for protection including German shepherds, Rottweilers, Mastiffs and Doberman Pinschers.
- Of the 10 to 20 fatal attacks each year, the majority of victims are less than 12 years of age.
- Nearly 70 percent of fatal attacks involve a family pet.

Fortunately there are steps we can take to address this problem:

- Dog owners should carefully consider their pet selection. Before and after selection, your veterinarian is the best source for information about behavior and suitability.
- Mixed breeds and not pure breed dogs are the type of dog most often involved in inflicting bites to people. The pure-bred dogs most often involved are German shepherds and Chow chows. The breeds most often involved in fatal attacks are Rottweilers and Pit bulls.
- Canines not spayed or neutered are three times more likely to bite than sterilized ones.
- You should not disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating or caring for puppies.
- Do not play aggressive games with dogs.
- Teach your children how to act around dogs.
- Do not pet a dog, even your own, without first letting the dog see you.
- Dog bites to people of the male gender are approximately two times greater than the incidence involving females.

- Make sure your pet is socialized as a young puppy, so it feels at ease around people and other animals. Expose your pet to a variety of situations a little at a time and under controlled circumstances; continue that exposure on a regular basis as your dog gets older.
- Keep your dog healthy. Have your dog vaccinated against rabies and preventable infectious diseases. Parasite control is important to how your dog feels and behaves.
- Neuter your pet. It's a fact neutered dogs are less likely to bite. Be a responsible pet owner. License your dog with the community as required. Obey leash laws. Dogs are social animals; spending time with your pet is important. Dogs that are frequently left alone have a greater chance of developing behavior problems.
- Be alert. Know your dog. You naturally would be alert to signs of illness, but you must also watch for signs your dog is uncomfortable or feeling aggressive.

If you think a dog may attack:

- ✓ **Avoid direct eye contact**
- ✓ **Do not run. Stand very still**
- ✓ **Stand very still until the dog moves away then back up slowly until the animal is out of sight**
- ✓ **Never let a dog get behind you**
- ✓ **Don't scream. If you say anything, speak calmly and firmly. Call out to the owner if possible.**
- ✓ **If the dog attacks, quickly scan your environment for weapons to hold the dog at bay, "feed" it a jacket, toy, or anything else you can place between you and the dog**
- ✓ **Wrap your weaker arm in clothing and use it to distract the dog**
- ✓ **If you walk through neighborhoods where there are unfriendly dogs, it is suggested that you carry a**

walking stick to ward off dog attacks. If you have to use a stick or weapon aim for the dog's jaw, face, throat or eyes

- ✓ **If you need to, climb on top of the nearest car or some elevated area.**
- ✓ **If a dog knocks you to the ground curl up and protect your face and neck. Cover your ears with your fists**

Dogs in the wild don't usually present a problem, most are loners and go out of their way to avoid humans. They are looking for food not trouble. If you encounter a wild dog accidentally it usually runs away. **It is however a potential problem in the woods and especially if the dogs are in a pack.** Dogs sometime band together in packs to search for food. **If you work in desolate areas, you should be prepared for dog attacks.**

Safety Tip: **Remember all dogs have the potential to bite. Prepare in advance what action you would take if you are attacked by a dog. Remember never leave infants and young children alone with a dog regardless of breed. If you work in desolate areas where wild dogs are a problem develop a response plan in the event you encounter a pack of wild dogs. It could save your life.**



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