



Lake Side Animal Hospital – Newsletter – May 2013

Dog bites and children

- 50% of dog attacks involved children under 12 years old¹
- 82% of dog bites treated in the emergency room involved children under 15 years old²
- 70% of dog-bite fatalities occurred among children under 10 years old³
- Bite rates are dramatically higher among children who are 5 to 9 years old²
- Unsupervised newborns were 370 times more likely than an adult to be killed by a dog⁴
- 65% of bites among children occur to the head and neck²
- Boys under the age of 15 years old are bitten more often than girls of the same age²

What can parents do?

Educate your children.

Studies have found that the number one dog-bite prevention measure is education. Children who understand how to act around dogs, how to play with dogs, when to leave dogs alone and how to properly meet a dog are much less likely to be bitten. To address this need, American Humane Association has created [American Humane KIDS: Kids Interacting with Dogs Safely™](#), a dog-bite prevention program specifically for children ages 4 to 7.

Supervise your children.

Unsupervised children may innocently wander too close to a dangerous situation. Eighty-eight percent of fatal dog attacks among 2-year-olds occurred when the child was left unsupervised. Supervision of children, especially around dogs, is one way to help ensure they are safe.

Safe rules of behavior for kids

Don't treat a dog unkindly.

- Never hit, kick, slap or bite a dog or pull on his ears, tail or paws.

Don't bother a dog when she is busy.

- Never bother dogs with puppies or dogs that are playing with or guarding toys, eating or sleeping. Always leave service dogs alone while they are working.

Don't approach a dog you don't know.

- Never approach a dog that is tied up, behind a fence or in a car.
- If you find an injured animal, call the police or animal control for help.

- If you want to meet a dog, first ask the owner for permission. If the owner says it's OK, hold out your hand in a fist for the dog to sniff. If he's interested, you can give him a little scratch under the chin (not over the head) and say hello.

Do be calm.

- Always talk in a quiet voice or whisper -- no shouting -- and take a "time out" if you feel angry or frustrated.

Do be still.

- If a loose dog approaches you, stand still like a tree. Keep your hands at your sides, and stay quiet and calm. Look away from the dog.
- If you are on the ground, curl up into a ball, like a rock. Keep your knees to your chest and your hands over your ears. Stay quiet and calm. Look down at your knees, not at the dog.
- Always make slow movements, set things down carefully and don't run when you're around dogs, as this gets them excited and they may accidentally hurt you.

[Learn more about dog bites.](#)

[Learn more about breed-specific legislation.](#)

Resources for additional information:

[American Humane KIDS: Kids Interacting with Dogs Safely](#) dog-bite prevention program

[American Veterinary Medical Association](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[National Center for Injury Prevention and Control](#)

References

¹Humane Society of the United States. (2005). National Pet Related Statistics. Shelter Pages, 37-38.

²Centers for Disease Control. (2003). Nonfatal dog bite-related injuries treated in hospital emergency departments-US 2001. MMWR, 52(26), 605-610.

³Sacks, J. J., Sattin, R. W., & Bonzo, S. E. (1989). Dog bite-related fatalities from 1979 through 1988. JAMA, 262(11), 1489-1492.

⁴National Canine Research Foundation. Fatal dog attack studies. Retrieved July 14, 2009, from <http://ncrf2004.tripod.com/id8.html>

Most kids don't think a cuddly dog would ever hurt them, but the fact is about 4.7 million dog bites occur every year in the United States — and more than half of kids bitten are under age 14. Dog bites can be much more than an innocent little nip, and some require hospitalization or even surgery.

Teaching kids a few basic dog manners, though, will let them — and dogs — enjoy safer encounters.



Other People's Pooches

Any breed of dog might bite. And just because a dog is small or seems friendly doesn't mean it can't do some damage. Even the nicest, most well-trained family dog may snap if it's startled, scared, threatened, agitated, angry, or hungry.

No matter how well you think you know the dog, always supervise your kids around someone else's pet. To reduce the risk of bites, teach kids these safety guidelines:

- Always ask the owner if it's OK to pet the dog.
- Let the dog see and sniff you before petting it.
- Do not run toward or away from a dog.
- If an unfamiliar dog approaches you, stay calm, don't look it directly in the eye, and stand still or back up slowly.

If a dog tries to bite you, put anything you can between you and the dog. If knocked over by a dog, roll into a ball, cover your face, and lie still.

Owner's Manual

A lot of the responsibility for preventing dog bites falls on the owner's shoulders. Before getting a dog, talk to a professional (such as a veterinarian or reputable breeder or pet shelter) to discuss what type of dog or breed is best for your household. Ask questions about the dog's temperament and health. A dog with a history of aggression is not suitable for a household with kids.

If your family has a dog, make sure it gets all required immunizations and regular vet checkups. Also, have it spayed or neutered. Consider taking your dog to obedience school to make it more social and obedient, and thus less likely to bite someone.

When you take your dog out in public, always keep it on a leash so you can be in control if its behavior gets out of hand. If you have kids, closely supervise them when they're around the dog and never leave an infant or toddler alone with your pet.

Even if you don't own a dog, make sure that your kids understand some "nevers" about being around dogs:

- Never squeeze dogs too tight, drop them, fall on them, or jump on them.
- Never tease dogs or pull their tails or ears.
- Never bother dogs while they're eating, sleeping, or taking care of their puppies.
- Never take a toy or bone away from a dog or play tug of war with a dog.
- Never feed a dog a treat with your fingers. Put the treat in your palm with your fingers and thumb held close together.
- Never crowd a dog or back it into a corner.

If a Dog Bites Your Child

If your child is bitten by a dog, contact your doctor, particularly if the dog is not yours. The force of a dog's bite can actually result in a fracture (broken bone). While rare, [rabies](#) and other kinds of infections can occur.

Try to have the following information available to help the doctor determine the risk of infection and what kind of treatment, if any, your child needs:

- the name and location of the dog's owners
- if the dog is up to date on its vaccinations
- whether the attack was provoked or unprovoked (an example of a provoked attack would include approaching a dog while it's eating or while it's taking care of its puppies). Knowing the attack was unprovoked has nothing to do with assigning blame, but it lets the doctor know that the dog could be sick, which might affect treatment decisions.

Animal bites and scratches, even minor ones, can lead to complications. In kids, the majority of animal bites are caused by dogs.

Some bites can become infected, especially those inflicted by cats, due to the type of bacteria in the animal's mouth. Whether the animal is a family pet or a creature from the wild, scratches and bites can carry disease. For example, cat scratch disease, a bacterial infection, can be transmitted by a cat scratch (usually from a kitten) even if the site of the scratch doesn't look infected.

A child whose tetanus shots are not up to date will need a tetanus injection after an animal bite to prevent [tetanus infection](#). Certain animals — such as bats, raccoons, and foxes — can transmit [rabies](#).



What to Do:

- If the bite or scratch wound is [bleeding](#), apply pressure to the area with a clean bandage or towel until the bleeding stops. If available, use clean latex or rubber gloves to protect yourself and to prevent the wound from getting infected.
- If the wound is not bleeding heavily, clean the wound with soap and water, and hold it under running water for several minutes. Do **not** apply an antiseptic or anything else to the wound.
- Dry the wound and cover it with sterile gauze or a clean cloth.
- Phone your doctor if the bite or scratch broke or punctured the skin. A child who is bitten by an animal may need antibiotics, a tetanus booster, or rarely, a series of rabies shots. A bite or scratch on a child's hand or foot is particularly prone to infection and should be evaluated by your doctor as soon as possible.
- If your child was bitten or scratched by an unfamiliar or wild animal, note the location of the animal. Some animals may have to be captured, confined, and observed for rabies. But do **not** try to capture the animal yourself. Look in your phone book for the number of an animal control office or animal warden in your area.
- Seek immediate medical care if:
 - the wound won't stop bleeding after 10 minutes of direct pressure
 - the wound appears to be deep, or is associated with severe injuries
 - the attacking animal was stray or wild or behaving strangely
 - the bite or scratch becomes red, hot, swollen, or increasingly painful

If you own a pet, make sure it's properly immunized and licensed.

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Date reviewed: October 2010

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