

## Dog Safety



### Preventing injury through education

Annually, hundreds of thousands of people across the country are injured by dogs.

Bites account for the most serious injuries.

Children are more likely to receive bites to the head and face because the child's lack of height often puts the face at mouth level to the dog.

In 2001, the Commonwealth of Virginia spent an average of \$6,152\* per person to treat the most serious dog-related injuries: those requiring hospital care.

Most dog-related incidents happen from dogs known to the victims.

How safe are you when around dogs?

\* 2001 cost data courtesy of the Center for Injury and Violence Prevention, VA Dept of Health.

### Do you know when dogs are most likely to bite? When they are:

#### Poorly trained, socialized and maintained.

Dogs that are not taught manners, who do not get socialized to the world and who are ignored and poorly supervised pose a greater bite risk.

**Scared.** Dogs who are scared or anxious may bite to stop the thing they are afraid of.

**Lower tolerance.** This comes from many things including poor training, frustration, feeling scared/anxious, feeling ill/sore, age-related aches, pains and etc.

**Possessive/protective.** Dogs that are eating, chewing toys, etc., are more likely to bite if they feel threatened. Dogs with puppies may try and protect their pups, even from people they know.

**When overly excited.** Many accidents are results of play gone too far, play that is too rough, lack of manners (such as jumping when greeting), etc.

**When tired/sleeping.** A tired dog is more likely to be less tolerant of things. Startling a dog awake can lead to a bite.

**When the owner is poorly educated about dogs.** Irresponsible dog owners are the real risk. They tend not to properly train, socialize or maintain their dogs. In turn, the dogs become what the owners make them.

### Basic dog language

#### Aggressive

- Dog will try to make himself look bigger by getting on his toes, raising his hackles (area over the shoulders) and fur down the back
- His ears may pin and eyes narrow
- Body will be stiff and tail out straight or slightly raised
- Teeth shown, with or without snarling

#### Fearful

- Dog will cower and try to look smaller
- Ears will be pinned and he will try to avert his gaze
- May or may not show teeth
- Tail may be tucked and dog may try to back away
- May or may not be shivering

#### Dominant

- Dog will be standing tall, with or without hackles raised.
- Mouth closed
- Ears up and forward, eyes wide
- Tail up and may be slowly wagging

#### Wants to play

- Ears forward and tail wagging
- Eyes bright and wide, mouth slightly open and may be panting excitedly
- Dog may be bouncing, play bowing and woofing/play growling

## **Safety when around loose dogs**

Never approach a loose dog, even if there is an owner present. Alert animal control to stray or roaming dogs.

Never run from a dog, fast movements trigger chase drives and most dogs are faster than us! Slowly walk away from the dog. If you are playing, stop until the dog moves on.

If the dog approaches you, remain calm and quiet. Stand still and do not look the dog directly in the eyes. If you are boring, there is a good chance the dog will move on.

If the dog starts to jump on you or attack, curl into a ball and use your hands to protect the back of your neck. Teach children to play turtle: curl up like they had a shell. Call for help.

## **Safety when approaching dogs**

Children must never approach a dog without adult supervision - even if the dog belongs to a friend or neighbor

Never approach a dog that is acting afraid, growling, showing teeth or who has puppies - even if the owner is there.

Always let the dog sniff you first and do not stare him in the eyes, some dogs may be threatened by this. Pat on the back or side, reaching over a dog's head may scare him.

## **Other Safety Tips**

Never hang over fences or put your hands through fence openings to touch a dog, even one you know.

Avoid rough games such as tug-of-war, jumping up for toys/food, wrestling and chase the kid, all could lead to injury if the game gets out of hand.

Never tease or hit a dog or pull ears, tail or feet and let sleeping/eating dogs alone!

Leave dogs with puppies alone. Some mother dogs may get very protective.

Report bites and seek medical attention. Depending on the vaccine status of the dog and local laws, the dog may need to be quarantined.

Ultimately it is the owner who determines how safe their dog will be.

There is no 100% safe breed or cross of dog.



Any dog is capable of biting and will if the need is felt.

## **Resources**

for US Residents only

The Association of Pet Dog Trainers,  
[www.APDT.com](http://www.APDT.com)

1-800-PET-DOGS

Resource providing information for finding a trainer and what to look for in a program.

Dogwise

[www.dogwise.com](http://www.dogwise.com)

1-800-776-2665

Source for books and other materials for all levels of dog ownership: novice to experienced.



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The Safe Kids/Safe Dogs Project

[www.SafeKidsSafeDogs.com](http://www.SafeKidsSafeDogs.com)

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