

Protect Kids Against Dog Bites

It is a little known fact that dog bites are the number one public health problem for children. In fact, school-age children receive more than 47% of all reported dog bites each year. Even more shocking is that two thirds of these incidents happen near the child's home, often by a dog the child knows. To prevent upsetting, or even tragic, situations resulting from encounters with dogs, teach children these important rules about how to behave around dogs.

- Dogs and other animals should always be treated with respect. Dogs do not like to be teased any more than people do. A child should never tease a dog into growling, barking, lunging, or otherwise acting aggressively.
- A dog that is chained or in a fenced yard should always be left alone. Dogs are territorial and may bite if they feel their home is threatened, even if it is by someone they know.
- Do not chase dogs or encourage them to chase you.
- Avoid dogs you do not know. Some dogs will bite when they are afraid, or they might bite to protect themselves or their territory.
- Ask before petting a neighbor's dog -- even if you know the dog well. The dog may be sick and your gentle pat may be painful.
- Don't run and scream around dogs. Quick movements and high-pitched squeals can frighten a dog, and frightened dogs may bite. Do not shout, run around, or stick hands at dogs through fences or open car windows.
- Dogs are possessive and territorial. Never bother dogs while they are eating or in their crate, special room, or special spot in the house or yard. Do not grab things like bones, balls, or other toy's from a dog.
- Don't stare at a dog. To dogs, staring is perceived as a threat, and they may react aggressively toward you.
- Never approach a strange dog.
- Never stick your hand into a dogfight, even if one of the dogs is yours.
- Know what an angry dog looks like. Barking, growling, snarling with teeth showing, ears laid flat, legs stiff, tail up, and hair standing on a dog's back are warning signs. If a dog appears this way, slowly walk away sideways. Shout "No" at the dog and act like the boss.
- Never stare a dog in the eyes or turn around and run away. If a dog attacks, curl up in a ball on the ground and protect your face.
- If bitten, tell an adult right away. Remember what the dog looked like, if it had a collar, and in what direction it went. Wash the wound with soap and water. See a doctor and report the bite to the local health department.

The reward for teaching consideration and respect for animals is children who are both humane and safe.