

If You Feel Threatened by a Dog

There are usually warning signs before a dog may bite. If you are approached by a dog and feel threatened, the following tips may reduce your chances of being attacked:

- Don't run away. Remain calm and avoid yelling.
- Stand still until the dog leaves, or back away slowly until the dog is out of sight.
- Avoid eye contact with the dog.
- If you fall to the ground, curl into a ball. Protect your head and neck with your hands.



Basic Safety Tips for Children

The friendship of a dog can be wonderful for a child's emotional and physical health, but children, especially those ten and under, are most at risk for dog bite injuries. By teaching your child these basic safety tips, you can help reduce that risk:

- Never approach an unfamiliar dog.
- Always ask the owner's permission before petting a dog.
- Approach dogs slowly and carefully.
- Never run from a dog screaming. Do not make loud noises around dogs.
- Pat the dog gently. Do not pull on the dog's fur, ears or tail.



- Do not disturb a dog that is sleeping, eating or caring for puppies.
- Never reach through a fence to pet a dog.



- Never try to help a hurt dog; get an adult to help.
- Play safe games, such as fetch, that are not rough.
- Never play with a dog unless supervised by an adult.

Important Telephone Numbers

Animal Management Division..... (301) 780-7200
 Commission for Animal Control..... (301) 883-6009
 Health Department —
 Animal Bites (301) 583-3750
 Poison Center..... (800) 492-2414
 Prince George's County Spay Spot..... (301) 254-8151
 Prince George's County
 SPCA/Humane Society (301) 262-5625, press 6
 Washington Humane Society
 Spay/Neuter Clinic..... (202) 882-5837



Prince George's County Department of Environmental Resources Animal Management Division

3750 Brown Station Road
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Spay/Neuter Saves Lives

Prince George's County Department of Environmental Resources Animal Management Division

BITING DOGS

What You Need to Know



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 County Executive



PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
 Department of
 Environmental
 Resources

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 Director



Biting Dogs

Animal bites, especially dog bites, occur frequently and are a serious health problem. The Humane Society of the United States estimates that between two- and three-million dog bites are reported every year. Over sixty percent of the victims are children.

Bites can result in psychological trauma, the transmission of various diseases such as rabies, permanent physical scarring or disfigurement, and death. Aside from providing your pet's basic needs, become familiar with the reasons why your dog might bite and what you can do to prevent it.

Reasons Why Dogs Bite

The majority of dogs are safe, reliable companions, but even a friendly dog may bite if threatened, angry, afraid or hurt. Understanding why a dog may bite is the first step in preventing the act from happening. Keep these possible reasons in mind:

- Cornering, crowding or standing over a dog may make it feel defensive. Children should stand back and keep their faces away from a dog's mouth. The face is the most common site of serious dog bite injuries.
- Stray dogs may be dangerous. Any dog that is loose may be lost, frightened or injured and more likely to bite.
- Sick or injured dogs may be afraid or irritable and should be avoided, especially by children.
- Elderly dogs may have impaired vision or hearing and may be more sensitive to touch which can cause them to be more easily startled.
- A dog that is excited or anxious may bite by mistake.
- Some dog owners mistakenly teach their dogs that biting is an acceptable form of play behavior.
- A dog may bite out of fear if it doesn't know you and is afraid that you might take over its territory.
- Fast, unpredictable movements, running and screaming children, or startling a dog while it's eating or sleeping may provoke a bite.
- Mother dogs can become very protective and may not tolerate her puppies being held.
- Dogs can feel left out, especially when a new baby or pet joins the household. Give your dog extra love and attention at these times.



Ways to Prevent Dogs from Biting

There is no way to guarantee that your dog will never bite someone, but you can significantly reduce the risk by following these recommendations:

- Spay or neuter your dog. Sterilization will not only reduce aggression but will also decrease a dog's tendency to roam.
- Train and socialize your pet. Introducing your dog regularly to a variety of people (including children) and situations can help prevent serious behavioral problems. To be effective, socialization should take place for the first two years of the dog's life.
- Teach your dog appropriate behavior. Don't allow it to jump on people, chase cars, bikers or joggers. Teach it to obey basic commands such as "no," "stay" and "come."
- Look for warning signs. Pet owners can often recognize their dog's display of aggression before an attack occurs.
- Until you are confident of your dog's behavior, don't put it in situations where it might feel threatened.
- Make your pet a member of the family. Dogs who spend too much time alone in the backyard or tied to a chain have a much greater chance of displaying behavioral problems.
- Obey all leash laws. For everyone's safety, do not allow your pet to run-at-large. Any dog that is found at-large may be impounded.
- Be a responsible pet owner. License and vaccinate your dog. Failure to license your pet is a violation of County laws and is subject to fines.



If Your Dog Bites Someone

If your dog should bite someone, act responsibly by taking these steps:

- Confine your dog immediately, and check on the victim's condition. If necessary, seek medical help.
- Provide the victim with important information, such as the date of your dog's last vaccination.
- Cooperate with the Animal Control Officer responsible for acquiring information about your dog. Strictly follow all quarantine requirements for your dog.
- Seek professional help to prevent your dog from biting again. Consult with your veterinarian, an obedience trainer or animal behaviorist.
- If your dog shows serious aggression that cannot be controlled, do not give him to someone else. If you are unable to keep him, discuss your options with your veterinarian or the Animal Management Division.



How to Care for a Bite

Surprisingly, most victims are bitten by their own dogs or by dogs owned by their family or friends. Follow these steps to ensure proper treatment of a bite:

- Immediately soak the wound in soapy water, and scrub the bite area.
- Dry the wound, and apply an antiseptic such as iodine.
- Seek medical treatment immediately; the Health Department will provide information and assistance with post-exposure shots.
- Report the bite to the Prince George's County Police Department at (301) 333-4000 and the Health Department at (301) 583-3750.
- Try to have someone keep the animal in sight. If you know where the animal lives, notify the owner so they can contain the animal.

