

Dog Bite Prevention

PVMA FACT SHEET

Nothing goes better together than kids and dogs but unfortunately, kids are also more likely to get bitten. Often it's just a matter of not understanding how to interact safely with a dog, especially one that isn't yours. We have to be able to read body language and understand nuances that tell us what the dog might be thinking. With a few tips, you can play and interact with dogs safely.

Meeting New Dogs

If you see a dog you think you'd like to meet, here are some tips on doing it safely:

- Ask before you pet. As well as being a courtesy to the owner, it allows them an opportunity to warn you if the dog is unfriendly or aggressive to strangers.
- Ask the owner the dog's name. Calling the dog by its name will help relax it.
- Allow the dog to smell your hand first. Sniffing is like a hand shake for dogs so introduce yourself before you pet.
- Don't reach for the dog's head. Many dogs don't like being pet on the head and could be frightened by a stranger's hand reaching for their face. Pet the dog on its side, chest, or back.
- Never hug a dog you've just met. Many dogs don't like to be hugged.
- Never scream or run away. You'll startle the dog and running away can make them want to chase you and can make them aggressive.
- If you encounter a dog on its own that you have not met before, leave it alone. Even a dog that looks perfectly healthy can carry diseases including rabies that can be transferred to humans.
- If you see a dog that looks sick, don't touch it. Call the local humane society or police department.
- If you see a dog you know that has gotten loose, try to call it to you. Running after it or trying to catch it can spook the dog.

Dogs at Home

- If you have a dog at home, you know its personality better than anyone else, but that doesn't mean you always know the right thing to do. Here are a few common sense tips that we might not think of to help you and your dog live harmoniously.
- Never leave your dog in a car when the outside temperature is 70 degrees or above. Even with windows cracked, the temperature inside the car will rise quickly, putting your dog at risk.
- If your dog is eating or enjoying a treat, leave him alone till he's finished. Even if your dog is not aggressive, dogs don't like to be disturbed while eating and might react aggressively if they think you're going to take their food away.
- If your dog is sleeping, never hit it or make loud noises to wake it. Dogs that normally are not aggressive may bite or growl if they are scared out of a deep sleep.
- Many dogs are afraid of loud noises like fireworks or thunder. The first rule of thumb is to make sure they are inside during these occasions. Dogs who are outside may run away to try and escape the noise. If the dog is in the house, it's likely he may try to hide under



the bed or behind a piece of furniture. It's best to let them go—they will come out when they feel safe. Trying to pull the dog out while it's hiding only increases the level of fear.

Resources

There are several very good resources on dog bite prevention available online. Here are a few of our favorites.

Puppies'n Dogs

www.puppiesndogs.com

This site is a wealth of information about dog breeds and their temperaments, size, grooming needs, and more. Find out which breed would be a good fit for your family or to add to a dog you already have. You can view breeders, search for available puppies, place an ad, or buy dog supplies. The blog section also has a wealth of information on a variety of topics, including dog bite prevention.

Dog Bite Prevention and Children

<http://www.vet.utk.edu/dogbiteprevention/>

This colorful, interactive website is designed to make learning about dog bite prevention fun. With games, puzzles, word searches, and printable items such as puppets and coloring books, kids won't even realize they're learning while they're having fun.

Doggone Safe

<http://www.doggonesafe.com>

This site is dedicated to dog bite prevention with categories for pet owners, bite victims, seasonal tips, and a section for kids with activities.

