

DOG BITE PREVENTION

What You Should Know!

Every 40 seconds someone in the United States seeks medical attention for a dog bite. 60% of these people are children.

Dog bites result in nearly 44,000 facial injuries in US hospitals each year. Severe facial injuries occur almost exclusively in children under 10 years old.

*To report a dog bite incident, please call:
Hillsborough County
Animal Services
(813) 744-5660*

WHY DO DOGS BITE?

The tendency for dogs to bite can be the product of many factors. Some breeds have a genetic disposition towards aggressive behavior. Factors that can increase the tendency of dogs to bite include: poor treatment of the animal, behavior of the victim, and even the weather.

It is important to remember that almost **ANY dog** can bite under the right circumstances. No matter how friendly or reliable a dog may seem, a dog is a dog, an animal whose behavior is quite different from that of humans and can't always be predicted with 100% accuracy.

Responsible dog ownership of *all breeds* is a key to dog bite prevention. While **ANY dog** can bite, the top biting breeds include:

- Pit Bulls
- Rotweilers
- German Shepards
- Huskies
- Doberman Pinschers
- Chow Chows

Dangerous situations with a dog may include:

- invading a dog's territory,
- a threat to the dog's family,
- a threat to the dog itself,
- a jealous dog, or
- a sick dog.

Take a stand for children. We are!



Warning Signs

The type and number of warning signs a dog may give can vary. Small children (and some adults) don't recognize a warning when they see or hear one. A very young child (under age six) doesn't necessarily know what a growl means. It's important to remember that what is obvious to an adult, isn't always understood by a child.

Adult supervision is essential!! It is up to the adult to keep the child safe from a dog and the dog safe from the child. Small children should never be left alone with any dog, no matter how reliable the dog has been before.

Warning signs a dog gives a child can come in stages:

- A dog may start by just walking away from a child that has begun to pet the dog. Walking away can be considered a warning.
- If the child's behavior towards the dog persists, the dog may growl next at the child.
- If the dog has tried to leave or has issued a warning with no response from the child, the dog has two choices-it can run away or it can defend itself by biting.

Whatever the warning signs are that a dog gives, all of them should be taken very seriously.

What can you do?

There are several things you can do to help prevent your child from being bitten. Teach your children the following **"DO's and DON'Ts"** when it comes to dogs:

- DON'T hold your face close to a dog.
- DON'T approach a strange dog.
- DON'T tease or startle a dog.
- DON'T disturb a dog that is sleeping, eating, or caring for puppies.
- DON'T run from or scream at a dog.
- DON'T stare a dog in the eye.

- DO be as still as possible and move away slowly either backwards or sideways.
- If the dog knocks you over, roll into a ball, cover your face and stay still.
- DO ask an adult before approaching a strange dog.

Adults...you can also do the following:

- Keep all pet vaccinations up to date.
- Keep dogs on a leash when outside.
- Spay/Neuter your dog to help calm them down.
- Socialize and train your dog.

The strongest weapon we have to protect our children from dog bites is prevention!

*For more information about injury prevention education and other programs offered through St. Joseph's Children's Advocacy Center, please call (813) 615-0589.
1401A East Fowler Avenue, Tampa, Florida 33612*

Sources: The Humane Society of the United States, 2003; Michael Bermant, MD, 2003; Dumb Friends League, 2000; Dog Owner's Guide, 1993



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