



## DOG BITE AVOIDANCE

### How can I avoid being bitten by a dog?

#### **Why do dogs bite?**

Dogs bite for all sorts of reasons, some very simple, some complex. They could be protecting their property like their home or their puppies. Sometimes they could be eating dinner and protecting food. They could be protecting a toy that's especially important to them. Or it could be for reasons that are difficult to identify, such as a lack of socialization. Being continuously chained can make a dog prone to biting. It could be that they weren't trained by their owner to look to people for guidance on how to behave. And it could be a combination of all of those.

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### Risk Management

Claims | 24-hour toll free number  
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#### *What kind of dogs should you stay away from? Is it just the big dogs?*

No, that is a very common misconception. Most times people want a list of ten breeds that they should stay away from, and that's really not something that you can accurately do because any dog can bite. Small dogs, just by their size, are probably going to do less damage if they bite. But they still bite.

#### *How can you avoid being bitten by a dog?*

- You should never approach a strange dog you don't know, especially one that's tied up or confined behind a fence or in a car.
- Don't reach out to pet a dog, even your own, without letting him or her see and sniff you first.
- Don't disturb a dog while it is sleeping, eating, chewing on a toy, or caring for puppies.
- Don't chase or torment a dog by doing things like sticking your fingers through a fence.
- If a dog is approaching you, and you feel afraid, don't run. Never turn your back to a dog and run away because a dog will catch you. A dog's natural instinct is to chase and catch fleeing prey and you can never outrun a dog. The best thing to do is to be like a tree and stand still. Often a dog just wants to investigate you. If they sniff you, that is good, then they will either leave, or if they don't, once they've had a good sniff you can very slowly start backing away.
- If you have a bag, package or clipboard in your hand, place it between you and the dog if it attacks.
- Avoid handing a package to a customer, especially a child, in the presence of a dog because the animal might observe that as a threat.
- If a dog is considered a threat, notify a supervisor and curtail delivery to the customer until the dog is restrained,
- Never wear headphones, so you can listen and hear a dog approaching from behind you.
- Patience is a huge asset in avoiding a negative encounter. Be willing to remove a hat and sunglasses and let a dog sniff you through a fence.
- If a dog maintains eye contact and never backs off the fence, a worker will know it's aggressive and that they can skip the home.
- Stay upright and keep vital body parts, including the head and neck, away from the dog.
- Some warn against using repellent as a first line of defense, noting that the type most people carry is effective against about 60 percent of dogs, and some dogs have higher pain tolerance.
- Likewise, the Humane Society discourages using deterrents such as pepper spray or mace because it is difficult to predict their success, and sometimes carrying a deterrent creates a sense of complacency. The Society prefers that people remain alert.
- Don't always assume a dog from previous encounters will react the same as before. Always be alert, a previously friendly dog may change.

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Always be aware of your body language when you are around a dog. Given conflicting verbal and physical messages, a dog will always attach greater importance to the physical messages. Remember that a dog may interpret your body language in different context than you intend.

- Avoid physical movements that a dog might find threatening including: staring directly into the eyes, reaching over the head even to attach a leash, stepping over the dog, leaning or pushing on the back, neck, or head, or pushing down on the rump.
- Additionally, refrain from using quick or jerky movements. Never try to restrain a dog by holding the dog's collar; use a leash!

### *What are the warning signs of a dog getting ready to bite?*

#### **Watch the dog's body language.**

- Never rely on a dog's tail to assess its state of mind.
- A wagging tail merely means that the dog is willing to interact.
- A dog that feels threatened will continue to wag its tail, but it will hold it lower and may wag it slower.
- A wagging tail could be good or bad! Instead, take into account all aspects of the dog's body language.
- Be wary around any dog whose demeanor includes:
  - staring
  - dilated pupils
  - wide-legged or stiff stance
  - lowered head
  - piloerection (raised hair along neck, back, or tail)
  - bared teeth
  - growling
  - laid back ears
  - general stiffening of the body



If you observe a dog showing any of the above behaviors towards you, move slowly and quietly away from the dog keeping your side facing the dog and your eyes averted.

### *What should I do if I think a dog may attack?*

- Never scream or run. Remain motionless, hands at your sides, and avoid eye contact with the dog.
- Remain motionless with your hands at your sides until the dog loses interest in you, then slowly back away until it is out of sight.
- If the dog does attack, "feed" it your jacket, purse, or anything that you can put between yourself and the dog.
- If you fall or are knocked to the ground, curl into a ball with your hands over your face, neck and ears and remain motionless. Try not to scream or roll around.
- A good way for a delivery company to reduce dog bites is to create a policy of not making deliveries to customers with uncontrolled dogs and to let the customer know this up front.

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### *What to do if you're bitten by a dog.*

If you are bitten or attacked by a dog, try not to panic.

- Immediately wash the wound thoroughly with soap and warm water.
- Contact your physician for additional care and advice.
- Report the bite to the local animal care and control agency. Provide all the details about the dog, including owner's name and address of where the dog was located.
- If the dog is a stray, let the animal control official know details about the dog. This would include what the dog looks like, where you saw it, and which direction the dog may have gone.

With the high number of dogs that share our homes and neighborhoods, the Humane Society of the US (HSUS) believes everyone should be educated in dog behavior. People encounter dogs everywhere, playgrounds, parks, on public sidewalks, parking lots and on private property. It's up to everyone to learn how to live around them safely and humanely.

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