

Preventing Dog Bites



Dogs can bring much joy into a home. They can be friends and protectors, but sometimes they bite. Who plays a role in preventing dog bites? **Pet owners, Parents and You.**

What can pet owners do to prevent dog bites?

- Train their dog how to behave around others.
- Always use a leash to walk their dog.
- Teach their dog to obey basic commands like “Sit” and “Come.”
- Understand how their dog communicates its feelings.
- Keep their dog healthy.
- Spay or neuter their dog.

What can parents do to prevent their children from being bitten by a dog?

In Los Angeles County, children ages 9 and younger are at greatest risk of getting bitten by a dog. It is very important for kids to learn how to be safe around dogs. Parents should always...

- Supervise their child when he or she is around a dog. Never leave children alone with a dog.
- Teach their child to respect a dog’s possessions. Don’t let them play with a dog’s toys or bedding. Show them it’s not okay to reach into the dog’s food bowl.
- Teach their child to respect a dog’s personal space. Don’t let them play roughly with a dog or pet, kiss, or jump on a dog when it’s resting or eating.
- Teach their child to notice the warning signs of a dog that’s ready to bite—growling, showing teeth, and cowering.
- Allow their child to help in the dog’s obedience training so they learn to notice dog behaviors.

What can you do to prevent dog bites?

- Be aware of your surroundings by being alert for loose dogs.
- Be cautious when approaching an open gate; it may let a dog out.
- Ask permission before petting someone else’s dog—put your hand out and allow the dog to sniff you before you pet it.

- Learn to read dog body language. Dogs “talk” using their tail, ears, and body posture, along with barking, whining, growling, snarling, and biting.

What should you do if approached by a dog?

1. Don’t look the dog in the eye; turn a little away from the dog.
2. Cross your arms, put your hands in your armpits, and be still. Don’t scream.
3. Let the dog sniff you. Wait for it to go away, or back away slowly. Most dogs will lose interest and go away.
4. If the dog begins to bite, give away something for the dog to bite on—“feed” your backpack or jacket to the dog.
5. If you’re knocked to the ground—curl in a ball and cover your face and neck with your hands.
6. Don’t try to run or ride a bike away from an attacking dog—they can go faster than you.

What should you do if you’re bitten by a dog?

- Seek medical care for your wound.
- Gather as much information as you can about the dog.
- Report any loose dogs to your local animal control agency.
- Report the bite:
 - Give information to your doctor.
 - Call your local animal control agency or Veterinary Public Health Program at: (213) 989-7060.
 - Submit an animal bite report online at publichealth.lacounty.gov/vet.

Need more information?

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
Veterinary Public Health
Phone: (213) 989-7060 Website: publichealth.lacounty.gov/vet/

