

## Dog Bites: Preventative Measures and Post-Bite Care

*Approximately 4.5 million dog bites occur each year in the United States. Almost 1 out of 5 bites becomes infected.*

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### **Who is Most at Risk?**

- **Children** — the rate of dog bite-related injuries is highest for those 5 to 9 years old; they are more likely than adults to receive medical attention for dog bites
- **Men** — are more likely than women to be bitten by a dog

### **Preventing Dog Bites**

- **Do**
  - Remain motionless (e.g., “be still like a tree”) when approached by an unfamiliar dog
  - Curl into a ball with your head tucked and your hands over your ears and neck if you are knocked over by the dog
  - Immediately let an adult know about stray dogs or dogs that are behaving strangely
- **Do Not**
  - Approach an unfamiliar dog
  - Run from a dog
  - Panic or make loud noises
  - Disturb a dog that is sleeping, eating, or caring for puppies
  - Pet a dog without allowing it to see and sniff you first
  - Encourage your dog to play aggressively
  - Let small children play with a dog unsupervised

### **If an Unfamiliar Dog Approaches You...**

- **Pay attention to the dog’s body language** — if you see a dog displaying the following signals, the dog may feel uncomfortable and bite:
  - Tensed body
  - Stiff tail
  - Pulled back head and/or ears
  - Furrowed brow
  - Eyes rolled so whites are visible
  - Flicking tongue
  - Intense stare
  - Backing away
- **Avoid**
  - Panicking or making loud noises
  - Direct eye contact with the dog or directly facing the dog as this can appear aggressive

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- **Prepare for a possible attack by**

- Slowly raising your hands to your neck, with your elbows in
- Saying “No” or “Go Home” in a deep, firm voice
- Stand with the side of your body facing the dog; keeping your body turned partially or completely to the side
- Putting your purse, bag, or jacket between you and the dog to protect yourself

### ***If You are Bitten or Attacked by a Dog...***

- **Immediately wash wounds with soap and water**

- **Seek medical attention, especially if:**

- The wound is serious (i.e., uncontrolled bleeding, loss of function, extreme pain, muscle or bone exposure, etc.)
- The wound becomes red, painful, warm, or swollen, or if you develop a fever
- It has been more than 5 years since your last tetanus shot and the bite is deep

- **Consider contacting the local animal control agency if the dog appears sick or is acting strangely or if you are unsure if the dog has a current rabies vaccination**

- **Contact the owner, if possible, to ensure the dog has a current rabies vaccination** — you will need the rabies vaccine license number, name of veterinarian who administered the vaccine, owner’s name, address, and phone number

- **For minor wounds:**

- Wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water, apply an antibiotic cream, and cover the wound with a clean bandage

- **For deep wounds:**

- Apply pressure with a clean, dry cloth to stop the bleeding
- If you cannot stop the bleeding or you feel faint or weak, call 911 or your local emergency services immediately
- See a healthcare professional as soon as possible

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#### References.

1. “How to Avoid a Dog Bite.” *How to Avoid a Dog Bite: The Humane Society of the United States. The Human Society of the United States, n.d. Web.*
2. “Preventing Dog Bites.” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 18 May 2015. Web.*