

Keep your kids safe this summer: Beware of dogs

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Children may be more comfortable with seeing dogs outside in the summer, but that doesn't necessarily mean that the dogs are comfortable with them. Dog bites are a serious issue, especially in the summer. More than 130 children were treated in the University of Rochester Medical Center's Pediatric Emergency Department for dog bite-related injuries in 2011.

“In the summer, [dogs](#) are out more, kids are out more, and the more contact that dogs and people have the more likely it is that somebody will get bitten,” said Anne Brayer, M.D., pediatrician in Emergency Medicine at University of Rochester Medical Center (URMC) and

director of Injury Free Coalition for [Kids](#), based out of Golisano Children's Hospital at URMC.

Avoid Dangerous Situations

Dog bite prevention often boils down to remaining calm and not aggravating a dog. Dogs bite when they feel anxious or threatened. Staying relaxed in the presence of an aggressive dog can go a long way in minimizing their threat. Brayer advised the following to help stay out of threatening situations with dogs:

- Never leave infants or young children alone with a dog. Because of their size, infants and toddlers are easy for dogs to reach and dangerously vulnerable to even minor bites.
- Keep children away from dogs that are eating, sleeping or caring for puppies. These dogs are more likely to be territorial and might instinctively lash out, even if they are normally gentle. Young children are unlikely to be aware of the dangers of disturbing a dog that is exhibiting signs of defensiveness.
- Do not approach an unfamiliar dog. Unfamiliar dogs are more likely to perceive you as a threat and may think you are challenging them. Refusing to make contact removes you as a threat.
- Stay away from neighborhood dogs that have an aggressive history and dogs that don't have much contact with children. Both groups can pose a serious threat to a child's welfare.
- Be careful when visiting older relatives who have dogs. These dogs often aren't used to young children and can be jealous of the attention they receive.
- Don't be lulled into a false sense of security because of the breed of a dog. All dogs can bite, and upbringing plays a much larger role in a dog's tendency to bite than breed.

Teach Children How to Act Around Dogs

The most frightening dog bite injuries occur in children who don't realize the danger they may be in around dogs. Always keep an eye on children, especially if there is a dog in the house. Staying alert to potentially dangerous situations is the first step to keeping children safe. Be sure to educate children on the tips above and keep the following tips in mind:

- Teach children to keep their faces away from dogs. The face and neck are very vulnerable to bites and this reduces the likelihood that the child will make eye contact with a dog and seem threatening.
- If approached by an unfamiliar dog, Brayer advises children to “act like a tree or act like a log.” Remain motionless and don't shout or make eye contact. If knocked to the ground by a dog, curl into a ball and protect your face and neck with your hands and arms. This can minimize injury by keeping the dog away from vital areas and removing your status as a threat.
- Don't tease a dog by pulling on its tail, petting it roughly, or taking away its toys. Even in play, this can excite a dog too much and lead to an unintentional bite.

Taking the right precautions can prevent dog bite-related injuries. To learn more about dog bite safety, visit

[www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationa ... /biteprevention.html](http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationa.../biteprevention.html) .

Provided by University of Rochester Medical Center

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