



Pet Safety

Risk Management for Dog Bites

Approximately 4.5 million dog bites occur each year in the United States, with nearly 20% requiring medical attention. To help mitigate the risk of dog bites, it is important to understand why dogs may bite, how to minimize contact and how to care for a wound if bitten.

Why Dogs Bite

All dogs can bite, especially when they are scared or startled; feel threatened, ill or stressed; are engaging in rough play; or are protecting their puppies, themselves or their owners. Most dog bites can be prevented by practicing the tips listed below.

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Plan Ahead

Before visiting a home with animals, it is important to ask the appropriate questions:

- How many pets are in the house?
- Are the dogs up to date on vaccinations?
- Do they have aggressive traits?

Prevention Tips

- Politely request that clients secure their pets prior to entering the home.
- Avoid contact if possible, by:
 - Alerting the dog of your presence by whistling or honking your horn.
 - Leaving your car door open while assessing the situation.
 - Staying in the car if the dog is loose or in the yard.
 - Not entering the yard of a loose or tied dog.
 - Avoiding dogs that are growling or barking.
 - Not touching a dog who is eating, chewing a toy or sleeping.
- When greeting a dog:
 - Stand still and quiet.
 - Ask permission before petting the dog, even if it appears friendly.
 - After receiving permission, let the dog sniff your closed hand.
 - If offering treats, place it in the palm with fingers together.

When Attacked:

- Shout “NO” and attempt to give it something – a hat, jacket, paper, etc.
- Protect your face and neck.
- Try to be still.
- Consider using pepper spray or spraying a garden hose to withdraw the attack.

If Bitten:

- For minor wounds:
 - Wash thoroughly with soap and water.
 - Apply an antibiotic ointment.
 - Cover the wound with a clean bandage.
- For deep or major wounds:
 - Apply pressure with a clean, dry cloth to stop the bleeding.
 - Seek medical attention.
 - If you feel faint or weak call 9-1-1 or your local emergency medical services immediately.
- Seek further healthcare if:
 - The wound becomes red, painful or swollen.
 - A fever develops.
 - You are unsure if the dog was up to date on its rabies vaccination.

Remember, not all injuries from dogs or pets are a result of bites or aggression; even a friendly dog can cause slips and trips or serious injuries. That’s why it is important to evaluate each client for the presence of pets and controls before beginning a visitation relationship. Develop a file and communicate any concerns, red flags and current vaccination records.

The advice presented in this document is intended as general information for employers. Contact your loss control consultant or visit AccidentFund.com for more safety tips and information.