Dog Bites

Typically, children are bitten by dogs on the face, neck and head. These bites can result in severe tears of the skin, infection or scarring.

Parents can protect their children by:

- Asking the owner’s permission before allowing your child to pet a dog.
- Supervising children while they play with dogs. Never leave a dog alone with a baby or young child. Lavish attention on your dog if you have a new baby so the dog doesn’t feel neglected.
- Assuming that any dog you don’t know may see you as an intruder or a threat.
- Waiting until your child is 4 years old to get a dog. Younger children are more likely to be bitten.
- Neutering your dog, especially male dogs. Male dogs are six times more likely to bite. Neutered dogs are three times less likely to bite.

Being safe with dogs

- Consider enrolling your dog in dog obedience classes. Your dog should learn to follow basic commands.
- A Houston ordinance requires you to always walk your dog on a leash. Always let the dog see and sniff the back of your hand before you pet it. This is how a dog gets to know you.

Teach your children to be careful

- Stay away from a dog that you don’t know or one that is chained.
- Keep your face away from dogs. Be gentle—don’t hit a dog or pull its tail or ears.
- Talk to dogs in a quiet soft voice.
- Don’t tease a dog with toys or by holding food out of reach. Dogs don’t like to be disturbed while sleeping, eating or caring for its puppies.
- Don’t reach through a fence to pet a dog.
- Don’t try to separate two dogs that are fighting.

When a strange dog approaches:

- Remain calm and stand very still.
- Never run from or scream at a dog approaching you. A dog is more likely to bite if you run away.
- If you fall or are knocked down, curl up into a ball, put your hands over your ears and lie still.
- Once a dog loses interest in you, slowly back away until the dog is out of sight.
- If a dog does attack, “feed” him your jacket, your purse or other object.

If your child is bitten:

- Immediately wash the wound well with soap and water.
- Call your doctor for additional care and advice.
- Call 911 or take your child the nearest emergency room if the bite is severe.
- Report the bite to your city’s animal care and control agency.

In 2004-2005, 336 children with dog bites came to Texas Children’s Hospital’s emergency room for care — most were younger than 9 years old. In 2 out of 3 cases, these injuries happen around the home and the child knows the dog.