



**Texas Children's  
Hospital®**

Center for Childhood  
Injury Prevention

# Dog Bites

Everything you need to know to keep your kids safe from dogs.

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.

## 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.

