

Simple steps can shield children from dog bites

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Over 4.7 million people, mostly kids, are bitten every year, experts say.

(HealthDay) -- More than half of the 4.7 million people bitten by dogs in the United States annually are children under the age of 14.

Among children, the rate of dog-bite related injuries is highest among those aged 5 to 9, according to the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

To help protect kids, the American Academy of Pediatrics offers safety tips for [dog owners](#) and parents.

- Choose a breed with a child-friendly reputation. You can never

be 100 percent sure of how a dog is going to behave, but experts recommend breeds such as collies and labradors. Ask a [veterinarian](#) about the typical behavior of certain breeds before bringing the dog home.

- Socialize your dog by continuously exposing the animal to different people and other pets so it is comfortable in a variety of situations.
- Train your dog to follow commands. Avoid aggressive games, such as wrestling or tug-of-war, which could reinforce bad behaviors.
- Vaccinate your dog against [rabies](#) and other diseases, and neuter your dog, which can decrease aggression.
- Never leave a baby or small child alone with a dog.
- Teach children to exercise caution around dogs. Avoid running past dogs and pestering dogs while it's sleeping, eating or caring for puppies.
- Don't let your kids approach dogs without asking the owner's permission first. Children should allow dogs to sniff them first and avoid touching their face, head and tail.
- If threatened by a dog, children should be told to remain calm, avoid [eye contact](#) and stand still until the dog leaves or back away slowly. If that doesn't work and they are knocked down, children should curl into a ball and protect their face with their hands.

Children who have been bitten by a dog should have their wound cleaned with soap and water. Larger wounds need immediate [medical attention](#). If possible, contact the dog's veterinarian to check its vaccination records.

More information:

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides more information on how to [prevent dog bites](#).

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