

Sudden Aggression in Dogs

The causes and treatments of a dog's sudden aggressive behavior.

Note: When handling an aggressive dog, take special precautions to avoid being bitten. Even if the dog is normally quiet and loving, do not assume he will not bite you. Muzzle the dog if necessary. Use heavily padded gloves or cover the dog's mouth with a thick towel or blanket. Herd the dog into a carrier, if possible, for transport to the nearest veterinary hospital. In extreme cases, isolate the dog in a room or pen and call animal control for assistance. CAUSES OF AGGRESSION

Pain: Trauma (cuts, broken bones, bruises), orthopedic disorders (arthritis, hip dysplasia, patellar luxation, back problems), ear infections, eye problems, and many others.

What to do: Take the dog to a veterinarian to diagnose the source of pain and administer treatment, if needed.

Illness: Diseases affecting mood or behavior (rabies, distemper, encephalitis, cognitive dysfunction, brain tumors, and many others).

What to do: Take the dog to a veterinarian to diagnose and treat.

Behavioral: Introduction of new family member (canine or human), maternal aggression, escalation of rough play.

What to do: Consult an experienced dog trainer or animal behaviorist.

Disclaimer: DogChannel.com's Dog Medical Conditions are intended for educational purposes only. They are not meant to replace the expertise and experience of a professional veterinarian. Do not use the information presented here to make decisions about your dog's ailment. If you notice changes in your dog's health or behavior, please take your pet to the nearest veterinarian or an emergency pet clinic as soon as possible.

Have a health question about your dog? Ask our vet expert or ask other dog owners on our forums.