

## Pet-Related Falls Injure More Than 86,000 Annually

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention release study on falls caused by dogs, cats.**

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Nearly 30 out of every 100,000 Americans are treated annually in an emergency medical facility for injuries sustained during falls caused by cats or dogs, according to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study slated for release on Friday, March 27.

The study provides the first national estimates of fall injuries associated with cats and dogs, which account for about 1 percent of the nation's 8 million fall-related injuries treated by emergency departments each year.

Overall, the CDC estimated 86,629 fall injuries each year were associated with cats and dogs, with dogs causing nearly 88 percent of the injuries. This estimate is likely underestimated because it did not include injuries that were not treated at all or were treated at home, physician offices, or non-emergency outpatient facilities.

Women were more than twice as likely as men to seek medical attention at an emergency facility due to a pet-related fall, the CDC said.

The most common primary injury diagnosis was fracture (30.7 percent), followed by contusions/abrasions (26.2 percent), strain/sprain (18.8 percent), laceration (12.8 percent), and internal injury (4.2 percent).

Although injuries were most frequent among people under 14 years or between 35 and 54 years, injury rates, especially fracture rates, were most common among people older than 75.

### Activity When

Injury Occurred	Percent of Injuries Caused by Dog	Percent of Injuries Caused by Cat
Walking pet	26.00	0.4
Caring for pet	5.29	1.1
Playing with pet	4.42	3.3
Chasing pet	5.01	1.7
Running from pet	3.1	0.4
Running with pet	1.30	0.0
Breaking up pet fight	0.60	2.2
Stepping over pet	0.52	4.4
Attacked by pet	0.40	2.0
Other/unknown	53.57	3.4

Source: Nonfatal Fall-Related Injuries Associated with Dogs and Cats — United States, 2001-2006; Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, March 27, 2009. The CDC did note, however, that "prevention measures for fall injuries should be balanced against the known health benefits of pet ownership." Simple awareness that pets and their items could cause falls could help reduce falls, the CDC said. In addition, the government emphasized that obedience training for dogs could help prevent injuries.

The study looked at unintentional, nonfatal fall injuries treated in emergency facilities from 2001 to 2006, as recorded by the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System All Injury Program, operated by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. The CDC estimates were based on 7,456 cases that involved dogs or cats.

The CDC acknowledged that one shortcoming of the study was that many case reports were incomplete, resulting in lapses of information. Data about the size or breed of dogs, for example, was rarely available.

Still, the CDC was able to report that 61.6 percent of dog-related falls occurred in or around the home and another 16.4 percent occurred in the street or another public place. The location was not known, however, in 20.3 percent of the cases. At least 26 percent of dog-related falls occurred while walking the dog.

In addition, 31.3 percent of dog-related falls involved falling or tripping over the dog, 21.2 percent involved people being pulled or pushed over by the dog, and 8.8 percent involved tripping over a dog item, such as a toy or bowl. Nearly 40 percent of falls, however, were related to other or unknown causes.

By comparison, nearly two-thirds of cat-related falls were attributed to falling or tripping over the cat, at least 3.5 percent to tripping over a pet item and nearly 1 percent attributed to being pulled or pushed over by the cat. About 30 percent of cases were related to other or unknown causes.

