

## Treating and Preventing Dog Bites

**Act quickly after a dog bite to prevent the transmittal of bacteria and rabies.**

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Sometimes even the most well-behaved dog can be provoked into biting someone. When this occurs, it's vital for the bitten individual to immediately wash the wound with soap and water and call the physician immediately.

According to Kate Stenske, DVM, a clinical assistant professor at Kansas State University's College of Veterinary Medicine, "wounds that are most likely to become infected are those on the face and hands, or when people wait more than eight hours before seeking medical attention."

Infections occur when bacteria from the dog's mouth transfer to the damaged tissue, or when bacteria that already exists on the victim's skin enter the damaged tissue. Some of the common bacteria transmitted are Pasteurella, Bacteroides, Fusobacterium and Streptococcus. According to Stenske, the rabies virus can be transmitted through bite wounds as well.

According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, more than 4.7 million people in the United States are bitten by a dog each year, most often perpetrated by a dog owned by the victim's family, friends or neighbors.

Young boys are at the greatest risk of being bitten by a dog because of their behavior and the inability to read the dog's body language. Their behavior can cause a frightened or threatened dog to bite.

To decrease the chance of being bitten by a dog, people must learn to recognize a dog's subtle signs of fear, nervousness or aggression. Neutering, training and socializing also help.

Veterinarians advise children to stand still like a tree when approached by a strange dog or curl up like a rock.