

# Dog Bites

## Prevention and rabies risk



*Every year the animal bites and rabies risk hotline takes countless calls about dog bites. Many of these calls are about facial bites to children who can be scarred emotionally and physically. These bites may require doctor visits, stitches, rabies vaccines, and the biting dog to be put down. Most bites are preventable.*

## What to do

### Know how to safely interact with dogs

- Never leave a child unattended with a dog, even for a minute and even if it is a known dog.
- Do not interrupt dogs that are sleeping, eating, chewing on a toy or bone, or are with their puppies.
- Don't approach a dog to pet it; let the dog approach you.
- Be a responsible dog owner: vaccinate your dog for rabies, don't let your dog roam alone, and know your dog's personality and limits.

# What to know

## Understand dog body language

Alert ears, fur standing up, growling, barking, and lunging are all aggressive signs; you should not approach this dog.

Crouching, flat ears, avoiding eye contact, licking its lips, tail between its legs, and rolling over can all be signs of an anxious dog. Approaching this dog could lead to a bite.

## Steps to take after a dog bite

After a dog bite, there are three concerns:

- **Wound care**
- **Need for tetanus vaccine**
- **Assessment for rabies risk**

Discuss these with your doctor.

If your child or you are bitten by a dog, make sure to get the owner's contact information and the dog's veterinary clinic information. Then contact the Minnesota Department of Health for further advice.

# For more information

- **Minnesota Department of Health**  
**<http://www.health.state.mn.us/rabies>**
- **651-201-5414**



At the Minnesota Department of Health, we work for all people and communities to have what they need to be healthy.

Visit us at [www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us)

*To obtain this information in a different format, call 651-201-5414. Printed on recycled paper. 8/19*