



# HUMAN EXPOSURE TO RABIES

## When Dogs Might Bite

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- ◆ When they feel threatened and, sometimes, when they're afraid.
- ◆ When they are protecting their territory, food, toys, family or pups.
- ◆ When they get excited, even in play.
- ◆ When they don't know you.
- ◆ When their 'chase response' is triggered.
- ◆ When they have been bred and/or trained to be aggressive.
- ◆ When they are in pain or irritated.

### "Do's and Don'ts" Around Dogs

- ◆ Always ask permission to pet a dog.
- ◆ If the owner says it is okay to pet the dog, do it gently and slowly. Stand quietly and still. Let the dog sniff the back of your hand (with your fingers curled into your palm). A dog may also sniff other parts of your body. That is how dogs say 'hello' and find out who you are.
- ◆ Never pet a dog without letting it see and sniff you. (Do not walk up behind a dog, even one you know, and pat it if it does not know you are there.)
- ◆ Never go up to a strange dog, particularly one that is confined or restrained (confined in a yard, chained to a doghouse, tied to a fence, etc.).
- ◆ Never go into a house or a yard where there is a dog without the owner being there.
- ◆ Never run past a dog, or turn your back to a dog and run away (a dog's natural instinct is to chase and catch its prey).
- ◆ Do not jump around, wave your arms or scream, even in play. These actions excite the dog and stimulate its chase response. Remember, too, that a dog does not have hands. If the dog thinks someone wants it to play, the only way it can interact is by jumping up or by using its mouth to 'grab' and hold. Dogs play rough with each other, and they may think that is the way people want to play, too.
- ◆ Do not make fast or jerky movements, particularly toward a dog's head or eyes. (If you hold out your hand for a dog to sniff, do it slowly and do not jerk it back all of a sudden. This could seem like teasing or could startle the dog.)
- ◆ Never disturb a dog that is sleeping or eating, or a dog taking care of puppies.
- ◆ Do not pet or pick up an injured animal without taking precautions. Even your own pet may bite you if it is in pain or afraid. Be careful, move slowly and try loosely muzzling the dog with a leash or rope. Get help to move the animal.
- ◆ Do not 'sic' a dog, even your own, on someone in play. (You will be teaching the dog that it is okay to attack someone, and the dog may think it is okay anytime.)
- ◆ Never stare into a dog's eyes, particularly if it is a strange dog. (That is how dogs challenge each other to fight, and it can stimulate an attack.)
- ◆ Do not put your face near a dog's mouth when you are playing or do not know the dog.
- ◆ Always assume that a strange dog may see you as an intruder or a threat, and be careful.

## How to Tell When a Dog Might Bite

- ◆ The dog may stand stiff and still, maybe with its hair up.
- ◆ It may stare at you.
- ◆ The dog may hold its tail stiff and up in the air. **Very Important** - a dog that is friendly will wag its tail, and the wagging will be very relaxed. If you see a dog whose tail is up, stiff and wagging very fast, watch out! That can also be a danger signal.
- ◆ It may growl, snarl, show its teeth or bark.
- ◆ Some dogs may not give any signs. When in doubt, be careful.

## What to do if You're Threatened by a Dog

If you think a dog may attack you, or you aren't sure what they want to do:

- ◆ Stand very still and try to be calm. Don't scream and run.
- ◆ If you are on a bicycle and the dog is chasing you, get off the bike, lay it down, and back slowly away from the bike.
- ◆ Be aware of where the dog is. Don't turn your back on it, but don't stare it in the eyes.
- ◆ If the dog comes up to sniff you, let it. In most cases the dog will go away when it decides you aren't a threat.
- ◆ If you say anything, speak calmly and firmly.
- ◆ Try to stay still until the dog leaves, then back away slowly until it's out of sight.
- ◆ If a dog does attack suddenly, 'feed' it your jacket, purse, your bike, or anything that may distract it and give it something to bite besides you.
- ◆ If you fall or are knocked down, curl into a ball with your hands over your head and neck. Try not to scream or roll around.

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