

Want More Information?

The Kent County Health Department has several education programs designed for a variety of audiences, including schools, clubs and neighborhood groups, to teach children and the public about Dog Bite Prevention and Responsible Pet Ownership. The presentations may be done offsite or combined with a tour of the Kent County Animal Shelter. For more information or to schedule a presentation, call Rachel Newland at (616) 336-3923 or the Animal Shelter at (616) 336-3210.

"The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way it treats its animals."
—Mahatma Gandhi

If you or your child has been bitten:

- Wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water. Seek medical attention if needed.
- Call the Animal Shelter at (616) 336-3210 to report the bite.

Kent County Health Department



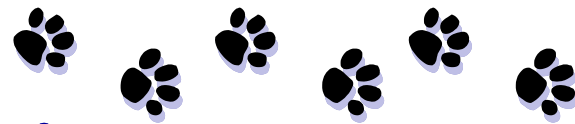
Kent County Animal Shelter

700 Fuller Avenue, NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

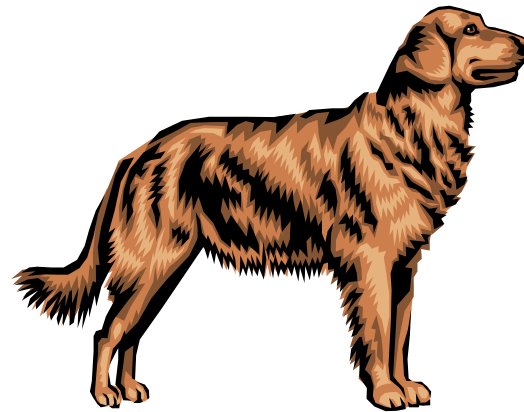
711 Ball Avenue, NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Phone: 616.336.3037
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Phone: 616.336.3210
Fax: 616.336.2425



How to Prevent Dog Bites



A Publication of the Kent County Health Department and Animal Shelter



Tips for Dog Owners



Dog owners have a responsibility to their community to make sure that their dog does not become a threat or nuisance to others. This may be avoided by following these simple tips:

- **Spay or neuter your dog.** This prevents unwanted litters, reduces your dog's aggression, need to roam, territoriality, and behavioral problems. Pets that are neutered live longer, healthier lives and are less likely to bite.
- **Keep your dog in good health.** This includes providing a balanced diet, proper exercise, adequate grooming and regular visits to the veterinarian for vaccinations and check-ups.
- **Never allow your dog to run free** in the neighborhood. Always have your dog confined or on a leash.



- **Always have a collar and an identification tag on your dog, including a current license.** Thousands of pets are put to sleep every year because they lack a form of identification.
- **Correct aggressive or inappropriate behaviors** right away. Train your dog to behave properly.
- **Know and obey the laws** of your city and county concerning pet ownership, including leash and licensing laws.
- **Socialize your dog**, not only with people but with other dogs and cats. Socialized pets are much less likely to bite and be aggressive toward other animals and people.



Strategies to Preventing Dog Bites



Important Information:

Dogs are wonderful pets that provide companionship, love and loyalty to many people. Many dogs will never bite someone but even the sweetest, most gentle dog can bite if provoked. **Every dog has the potential to bite and any breed can be dangerous.** The majority of dog bites occur in a familiar place by a dog owned by a family member or a friend.

Additionally, in Kent County, children represent 50% of dog bite cases. Dog bites are second only to baseball/softball injuries as the most common reason for childhood emergency room visits. Due to these daunting facts, it is crucial that every dog owner be responsible. This includes learning the basics about dog behavior, safety and care and also understanding and obeying the laws pertaining to dog ownership.



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Which dogs bite?

ANY dog has the ability to bite. Although some breeds commonly labeled as aggressive, it's important to remember that any dog can bite. In Kent County, some of the most common biting dogs include those labeled as "family dogs"—labs, collies, and retrievers. It's also important to remember that a dog of any age or size may be unsafe—including puppies. Consequently, there is no way to know if a dog will be a biter just by knowing the breed, size or age. Take caution with ANY dog and NEVER leave children alone or unattended with a dog.



Dogs may bite when:

- They are protecting their territory, family, food, toys, bed, puppies or themselves.
- They don't know you.
- They feel threatened or afraid.
- They are sick, injured or in pain.
- They are irritated, uncomfortable or being teased.
- They are really excited or have a desire to chase.
- They are bred and/or trained to be aggressive.



Ways to avoid being bitten:

- Always ask permission to pet a dog and let the dog sniff your hand before petting it.
- Never approach a strange dog or a dog that is tied up, fenced in or in a house unless the owner is there.
- Never disturb a dog that is eating, sleeping, or taking care of puppies.
- Do not touch an injured animal. Consult your veterinarian or call the shelter for advice.
- Do not stare into a dog's eyes.
- Never turn your back on a dog.
- Do not jump around, wave your arms, scream, or run by a dog. These actions will excite the dog and stimulate it to chase you and/or act aggressively.
- Do not put your face near a dog's mouth when you are playing or when you do not know the dog.
- Always be careful around animals and treat them with respect.



If you are threatened by a dog:

- Stand very still and remain calm. Never scream or run.
- Do not turn your back on the dog.
- Always know where the dog is without staring directly in its eyes.
- If you say anything to the dog, speak calmly and firmly.
- If the dog approaches to sniff you, let it. Most of the time the dog will leave you alone when it realizes that you are not a threat.
- Stay still until the dog leaves. When it does, back away slowly.
- If a dog does attack, keep something between you and the dog. "Feed" it your jacket, purse, bike, or anything that will distract it and prevent it from biting you.
- If a dog knocks you down, curl into a ball with your arms over your face, head and neck. Try not to scream or move.

