

Dog Bite Injuries in Virginia, 2007

- An estimated 4,346 people were seen in an emergency department/urgent care center for a dog bite injury.
- Thirty-one percent were children 14 and under. Dog bite injury rates are highest among 5-9 year olds and then decrease with increasing age.
- A majority of injuries among children 4 and under (78%) and children 5-9 (55%) were to the head, neck, and face region. Injuries to the extremities occurred most often among individuals 10 and over (60%).

Prevention Tips

Regardless of the sex or breed, any dog can bite if provoked. Responsible pet ownership and knowing how to behave when approached by a dog will reduce the likelihood of being bitten by a dog.

The following safety tips for children and parents can help prevent dog bites:

- Do not approach an unfamiliar dog.
- Don't run, ride or skate close to a dog ; dogs naturally love to chase and catch things. Don't give them a reason to become excited or aggressive. Remain motionless (e.g., "be still like a log") when approached by an unfamiliar dog.
- If you are threatened by a dog, remain calm. Don't scream. If you say anything, speak calmly and firmly. Avoid eye contact. Try to stay still until the dog leaves, or back away slowly until the dog is out of sight. Don't turn and run.
- If knocked over by a dog, roll into a ball and lie still (e.g., "be still like a log").
- Always ask an owner if you can pet their dog before doing so. Do not let children play with a dog unless supervised by an adult.
- Immediately report stray dogs or dogs displaying unusual behavior to your local health department or your local animal control office.
- Avoid direct eye contact with a dog.
- Do not disturb a dog that is sleeping, eating, or caring for puppies.
- Do not pet a dog without allowing it to see and sniff you first.
- If bitten, immediately report the bite to an adult.
- Consult with a professional (e.g., veterinarian, animal behaviorist, or responsible breeder) to learn about suitable breeds of dogs for your household.
- Dogs with histories of aggression are inappropriate in households with children.
- Spay/neuter all dogs (this frequently reduces aggressive tendencies).
- Never leave infants or young children alone with any dog.
- Do not play aggressive games with your dog (e.g., wrestling or tug-of-war).
- Properly socialize and train any dog entering the household.
- If a bite occurs wash the wound thoroughly with soap and lots of water and then seek medical attention immediately. Report the bite to the local health department or your local animal control office.

Virginia Dog Bite Case:

While an 11 year old was riding his bike to the local pool he was attacked by two dogs. As he passed a house with the dogs in a containment pen they got out and chased him down the street. He tried to fight them off but received bites to both legs and thighs.



Division of Injury and Violence Prevention
Virginia Department of Health
1-800-732-8333
www.vahealth.org/civp

Resources:

- ♦ Division of Injury and Violence Prevention, Virginia Department of Health
www.vahealth.org/civp
- ♦ Division of Environmental Epidemiology, Virginia Department of Health
www.vdh.state.va.us/epidemiology/DEE/
- ♦ Center for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control
www.cdc.gov/ncipc/duip/biteprevention.htm
- ♦ American Veterinary Medical Association
www.avma.org/onlnews/javma/jul06/060701i.asp
- ♦ American Academy of Pediatrics
www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/dogbitetips.cfm