

SECTION 2: SAFETY ON THE JOB

PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST DOG ATTACKS

If you are showing a property and find yourself in the home or the yard with canine company, what do you do? Remember, even if you are a dog-lover and comfortable around them, you are intruding on the animal's territory and may be seen as a threat.

Your best defense is to always ask clients if they own dogs and if so, what they plan to do with the dog or dogs during showings. Discuss how friendly the pets are with strangers, including children. If your clients have reason to believe their dog will react to strangers entering the home, ask that they lock the dog in a certain room or make arrangements to keep the dog off site if they cannot be present to control the dog.

Even with these precautions, you may occasionally find yourself face-to-face with a strange dog. Here are some tips on how to handle this situation:

- Try to leave the home as quickly as you can do so safely.
- Never approach an unfamiliar dog. If the dog approaches you, stand still. If the dog appears friendly —head and ears up, tail wagging—let it sniff you and speak to it in a soothing voice.
- Don't look any unfamiliar dog in the eye; dogs see this as aggressive behavior. Don't run or scream; you rarely can outrun a dog.
- If the dog is growling, has bared its teeth and otherwise gives you reason to believe it is aggressive, try to place something between yourself and the dog, such as a briefcase or coat. Slowly back away. If the dog starts to circle you, turn with it rather than letting it get behind you.
- Don't disturb a dog that is sleeping, eating or caring for puppies. And never play with a dog without allowing it to see and sniff you first.
- If a dog knocks you over, your best defense is to roll into a ball, cover your face or neck and stay still.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE >

PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST DOG ATTACKS | CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

If You Are Bitten by a Dog

Treat any dog-bite wound immediately. For minor bites, you should be able to control the bleeding with cold water and/or pressure, and wash the area of the bite thoroughly with soap and water.

For a serious dog bite, go to your local hospital emergency department. Because severe bites may cause permanent scarring, if stitches are required you should ensure that they are performed by a plastic surgeon who is certified by The American Board of Plastic Surgery. This certification means that the surgeon is qualified to perform reconstructive and cosmetic procedures.

If you know who owns the dog that bit you, ask for the pet’s vaccination record. If the animal is a stray, or you can’t find the owner, call the animal control agency or health department in your area. They will try to find the animal so it can be tested for rabies.

If the animal can’t be found, if it shows signs of rabies, or if a test shows that the animal has rabies, your doctor will probably want you to get a series of rabies shots. You need to get the first shot as soon as possible after the bite occurs. After you receive the first shot, your doctor will give you five more shots over a 28-day period.

And, if your last tetanus shot was more than 5 years ago, you may need a booster shot. Ask the doctor who treats your wound.

(Sources: American Veterinary Medical Association, “How to Defend Yourself against a Dog Attack” by Adam Katz; “Preventing and Surviving Dog Attacks” by Cheryl Morrissette; and familydoctor.org)