

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
Governor

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Vision: To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BE SAFE, EVEN NICE DOGS CAN BITE

Milton, FL – Almost half of American households have a dog. Dogs can make our lives better by providing companionship, decreasing stress and helping us stay active. It is no wonder they are called “man’s best friend”. But sometimes even a well-trained, well-behaved dog will bite. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) there are approximately 4.5 million dog bites in the U.S. each year.

The Florida Department of Health in Santa Rosa County would like to share some tips for preventing dog bites:

- Do not allow small children to play with a dog unsupervised. Children between the ages of 5 and 9 are the ones most often bitten. A responsible adult should always supervise play between children and dogs.
- Do not disturb a dog that is sleeping, eating or caring for puppies.
- Do not encourage a dog to play aggressively.
- Do not approach or try to pet an unfamiliar dog, especially if it is acting strangely.
- If approached by an unfamiliar dog, stay still, do not move.
- Do not run from the dog or make loud noises.
- Avoid eye contact, which can be interpreted by the dog as a sign of aggression.
- Speak in a firm voice and tell the dog “No” or “Go home”.
- Back away slowly or wait for the dog to pass.

If you are bitten by a dog:

- Immediately wash the wound with soap and warm water.
- If the wound is not serious, apply antibiotic cream and cover with a clean, dry bandage.
- It is possible for a bite from a dog to become infected from bacteria in the dog’s mouth. Tetanus is one of the diseases that can be transmitted by a dog bite. Get a tetanus booster if it has been more than 5 years since your last tetanus shot.

Florida Department of Health

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- If the wound becomes painful, red, swollen or warm, seek medical attention.
- If the wound is serious or the bleeding cannot be stopped, call 911 or go to the emergency room immediately.
- Report the bite to animal control, the county health department or the police.

Rabies is another disease that can be contracted from a dog bite, although it is rare in the U.S. where most pets are vaccinated against rabies. However, if the vaccination status of the dog is not known, or the animal cannot be located, contact your health care provider. Rabies in humans is usually fatal, but can be prevented if the person bitten receives the rabies vaccine as soon as possible.

For more information on dog bite prevention visit the Florida Department of Health website at <http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/prevention/dog-bite-prevention/index.html> or the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/features/dog-bite-prevention/index.html>.

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