

Family Dog Bites Are Preventable



The Center for Canine Behavior Studies is a Connecticut-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing canine behavior research and human-directed education to reduce family dog bites, particularly those affecting children, through their Be BiteSmartSM initiative.

Family dogs are our best friends but can bite when feeling imposed upon, threatened or afraid.

By learning and respecting what dogs do and do not like and how they communicate their concerns, we can avoid triggering a reactionary bite.

Led by world-renowned veterinarian Dr. Nicholas H. Dodman, Professor Emeritus, Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, USA, Be BiteSmart aims to support families in learning to recognize a dog's behaviour and signals that often precede a reactionary bite, learning skills that contribute to a safe and loving environment.

Dogs are our best friends

Dogs are extremely innocent, vivacious, funny, and affectionate creatures. Unconditional dogs are our friends to protect, entertain, and work for us. They continue to do all of these things, but now in an accepted capacity as a family member.

Dogs are not humans

While we love to anthropomorphize dogs, they see us not as friends and family in the way we understand it but rather as part of their social group in which humans are seen as pack

leaders or companions. Dogs can become confused when humans unknowingly behave differently or respond in ways dogs cannot interpret.

Being informed is being forewarned

Dogs are often friendly, playful, and loyal. However, when dogs feel threatened, overwhelmed, or frightened, they may resort to biting as a form of communication. Understanding how dogs express discomfort allows humans to intervene before a bite occurs.

Ensuring close supervision

Children should never be left alone with dogs. Even the most familiar dog can bite if startled, frightened, or in pain. Supervision by a responsible adult is essential to ensure safe interactions between children and dogs.

Reducing risk

Most family dog bites are predictable and preventable. Education that focuses on both adults and children significantly reduces the risk of injury.

Being prepared

Children should be taught:

- To recognize warning signs in dogs
- Not to approach dogs who are eating, sleeping, or caring for puppies
- To avoid hugging, kissing, or climbing on dogs

Adults must:

- Intervene early
- Supervise interactions
- Advocate for both children and dogs

Be BiteSmart

Be BiteSmart is a human-canine education initiative designed to encourage and help families learn how a dog communicates through body language and sound, how dogs perceive their likes and dislikes, and strategies for family interactions and how to cope with stress. The dog is always part of the family but never a toy. Children should always be supervised around dogs and taught to respect their space and signals.



About the characters

Alex – represents a child learning safe behavior around dogs

Charlie – represents a friendly family dog