

Making sure your dog is your child's best friend (and vice versa)

While staying at home has been keeping people safe from coronavirus, it does mean routines have become very disrupted which can affect everyone, even the family dog.

Both children and their pets are used to more active lifestyles, with far less time in the house together, than are possible for many families at the moment. Avoiding incidents between dogs and children is important as children are more likely than adults to suffer more serious injuries if a dog snaps, particularly in the head and neck areas. Most dog bites affecting young children occur during everyday activities and while interacting with familiar dogs.

Avoiding Dog Bites:

- Never leave a baby or small child alone with a dog, no matter if it is the family dog, a dog that is known to you, or a dog that you have been assured is well behaved. Any dog could bite
- Do not allow your child to play aggressive games with a dog, such as tug-of-war or wrestling, as this can lead to bites.
- Teach your child to always ask a dog owner for permission before petting any dog.
- Let a dog sniff you or your child before petting, and stay away from the face or tail. Pet the dog gently, and avoid eye contact, particularly at first.
- Never bother a dog that is sleeping, eating, or caring for puppies. Dogs in these situations are more likely to respond defensively, even with a person who is familiar to them.
- Ensure that your child doesn't attempt to snatch a dog's toys
- Avoid your child wandering around with food or allowing your dog to beg at meal times
- Teach your child to behave calmly and slowly around dogs.
- Teach your child that if a dog is behaving in a threatening manner—for example, growling and barking—to remain calm, and back away slowly
- If you or your child is knocked over by a dog, curl up in a ball and protect the eyes and face with arms and fists.
- Reference: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/all-around/Pages/Dog-Bite-Prevention-Tips.aspx>
- Further advice can be found on the blue cross website: <https://www.bluecross.org.uk>

If your child is bitten, follow these steps:

- Clean the wound immediately under warm running water
- Remove any objects from the bite such as teeth, hair or dirt
- Encourage the wound to bleed by gently squeezing it unless it is bleeding freely
- If it is bleeding heavily, cover with a clean pad and apply pressure
- Dry the wound and cover with clean plaster or dressing
- Seek medical advice unless the bite is very minor. In North East Lincolnshire you can ring 01472 256256 for advice 24/7 or use the NHS 111 online service.
- For more information visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/animal-and-human-bites/>