Any dog of any breed has the potential to bite. Dog bites are a largely preventable public health problem. Most people are bitten by their own dog or one they know. There is little scientific evidence to support the claims that certain breeds of dogs are more likely to bite.

Why be concerned about dog bites?

- About 4.5 million people are bitten by dogs each year.¹
- Almost one in five of those who are bitten, about 885,000, require medical attention for dog bite-related injuries; half of these are children.¹
- In 2012, more than 27,000 people underwent reconstructive surgery as a result of being bitten by dogs.²

Who is at risk?

- **Children:** Among children, the rate of dog bite–related injuries is highest for those ages 5 to 9 years, and children are more likely than adults to receive medical attention for dog bites.³ Most dog bites with children occur during everyday activities when interacting with familiar dogs.
- **Senior Citizens:** According to the AVMA, senior citizens are the second most common dog bite victims
- **Adult Males:** Male adults are more likely than female adults to be bitten.¹
- **People with dogs in their homes:** Among children and adults, having a dog in the household is associated with a higher incidence of dog bites. As the number of dogs in the home increases, so does the incidence of dog bites. Adults with two or more dogs in the household are five times more likely to be bitten than those living without dogs at home.¹

How can dog bites be prevented?

**Before you bring a dog into your household:**

- Carefully select your pet. Do not get a puppy on impulse.
- Wait until your child is older to get a dog. It is suggested that parents wait until the children are older than 4 years.
- Choose a veterinarian who can help you identify a reputable trainer for your new family member.
- Be sensitive to cues that a child is fearful or apprehensive about a dog. If a child seems frightened by dogs, wait before bringing a dog into your household. Dogs with histories of aggression are not suitable for households with children.

- Spend time with a dog before buying or adopting it. Use caution when bringing a dog into a household with an infant or toddler.

**Once you decide to bring a dog into your home:**

- Spay/neuter your dog (this often reduces aggressive tendencies).
- Never leave infants or young children alone with a dog.
- Don’t play aggressive games with your dog (e.g., wrestling).
- Properly socialize and train any dog entering your household. Socialize your puppy so that it feels comfortable around other people and animals so that it does not feel threatened or teased. Training your dog builds a bond of obedience and trust.
- Immediately seek professional advice (e.g., from veterinarians, animal behaviorists, or responsible trainers) if the dog develops aggressive or undesirable behaviors.
The purpose of this educational fact sheet is to briefly highlight pet owner responsibilities, safety precautions around dogs, along with bite prevention tips. The defensive techniques described in this fact sheet are designed to prevent or minimize injury from dog bites. The fact that no one single defensive technique can guarantee to prevent all dog bites or injuries and because of the unpredictability of this subject matter, the author, OSU College of Veterinary Medicine, and the Cooperative Extension Service-Division of Agricultural Sciences, assumes no responsibility for injury that may result from using the defensive techniques in this fact sheet.

4. American Veterinary Medical Association, avma.org