



PREVENTION MATTERS

THE CENTER FOR INJURY PREVENTION AND POLICY

Animal Bites

Animal bites are scary and may sometimes seem sudden or uncalled-for, but they can usually be prevented. Most animal bites in Maryland come from cats and dogs since they are common pets. Over half of all dog bites are from dogs we know, like neighborhood dogs or even our own pets. Always remember, **any dog can bite**. Many times, animal bites are very painful and can result in severe injury, disease, or infection. Cat bites are more likely to get infected than dog bites, but dog bites are more common. Bites from pets generally occur when the animal is being bothered or teased.



WHAT IF I SEE A WILD ANIMAL? Never approach a wild or unfamiliar animal! If the animal seems to be injured or in trouble, immediately call Animal Control or a police non-emergency number. If an unfamiliar dog approaches you, stand very still. Do not run away. If the dog knocks you over, tuck your head in, curl into a ball, and cover your ears and neck with your hands.

Warning Signs That an Animal May Be About to Bite

- Showing its teeth
- Growling
- Nipping or light biting
- Snapping
- Stiff or rigid body frame
- Lowering its head
- Fur is standing on end
- Ears are flattening against its head

If the animal is showing any of these signs, it should be left alone immediately.

Can I Pet Someone Else's Dog or Cat?

Yes, but never touch someone else's pet without asking the owner first. The pet may look friendly but could still be aggressive or dangerous. Service animals with a vest are working for their owners and should never be petted.

When approaching someone else's animal, always:

- Ask the owner first if you may pet it.
- Let it sniff your open palm or hand.
- If the pet backs away or shows any signs of aggression, do not continue to approach.
- If the animal seems calm, you may continue to slowly approach and touch it.
- Keep your hands and face away from the animal's mouth at all times.

Rabies

Rabies is a serious viral illness transferred by the saliva of an infected mammal (dog, cat, fox, etc.) to a human or other animal. Rabies is almost always deadly. The best way to prevent rabies in humans is to make sure their pets get vaccinated regularly. Pets who are vaccinated will not get rabies from wild animals, and then will not infect humans with the virus.



Signs that an animal may have rabies:

- They are foaming at the mouth
- They are aggressive or look like they want to attack
- They are not behaving normally. For example, night animals that are coming out during the day.
- The animal looks like it is "stumbling" or is unsteady on its feet

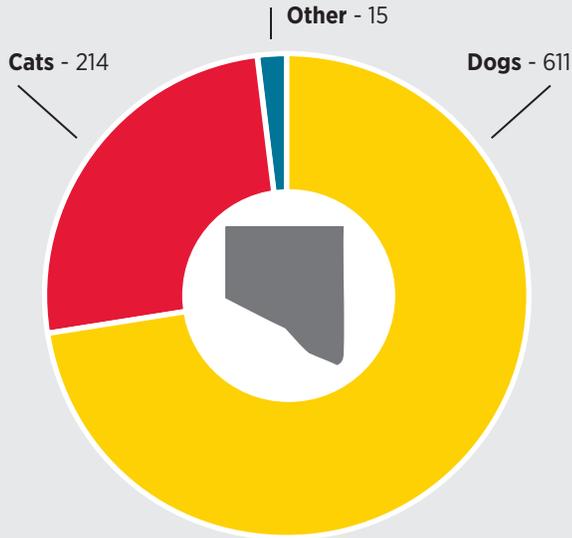
In Maryland, raccoons and foxes are the most common wild animals to have rabies. It is very important to seek medical attention immediately after being bitten by an animal, even if the animal does not look rabid.

Other Injuries/Risks From Animal Bites

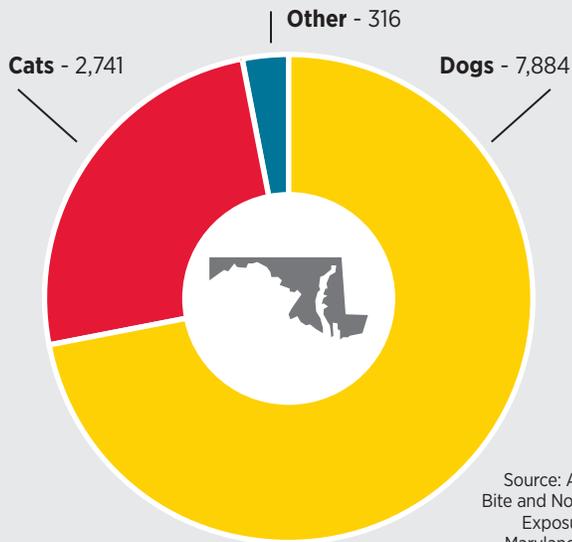
- Nerve damage or loss of function in a body part
- Removal of or permanent damage to skin
- Infection

NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

Animal Bites in Baltimore City in 2017



Animal Bites in Maryland in 2017



Source: Animal Bite and Non-Bite Exposures in Maryland, 2017



Who Is Most at Risk?

School-aged children have the highest risk of being bitten by an animal, especially by a cat or dog. Most bites happen on the face, hands, arms and legs. To prevent animal bites in children:

- Always keep a close eye on young children around animals, even “well-behaved” pets.
- Teach young children to never touch a pet without asking first, and never touch a wild animal.
- Never approach an animal that is caring for its newborn puppies or kittens

What If I or a Loved One Are Bitten?

- Apply pressure to the wound to stop the bleeding.
- Wash the wound with soap and water.
- Get medical treatment quickly.
- If the animal has an owner, ask the owner to keep the pet locked away for 10 days. If an animal completes the 10-day quarantine without showing signs of rabies, you are unlikely to have the disease.
- If it is a wild animal, notify Animal Control immediately. Do not try to trap the animal yourself.



University of Maryland Medical Center

UM Baltimore Washington Medical Center

UM Capital Region Health

UM Charles Regional Medical Center

UM Rehabilitation & Orthopaedic Institute

UM St. Joseph Medical Center

UM Shore Regional Health

UM Upper Chesapeake Health

Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital

RESOURCES:

avma.org/dogbiteprevention

aspc.org/pet-care/dog-care/dog-bite-prevention

medlineplus.gov/animalbites.html

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON:

Center for Injury Prevention and Policy: umm.edu/CIPP

STC Prevention Matters: umm.edu/PreventionMatters