

Dog Bite Season Gets in Full Swing with Warmer Weather

The factors surrounding dog bite injuries are the focus of much public debate. There is no dispute, however, that because all dogs have teeth, all dog breeds can bite. But not all dog bites are created equal. What is important to consider within this public debate is that there are three levels of dog bite injury: a dog bite, a severe dog bite and a dog mauling.

Some 4.7 million Americans are bitten by dogs each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Children under 14 years of age represent the highest-risk group, accounting for up 42% of all dog bite injuries treated in emergency departments, according to the CDC.

A recent report published by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) shows that in 2008, there were 316,200 emergency room visits and 9,500 hospital stays related to dog bites. The report also showed that while *ER visits* remained relatively steady from 1993 to 2008, *hospitalizations* increased by more than 86%, with elderly people having the highest hospitalization rates.

Three Levels of Dog Bite Injury

1. The first level of dog bite injury is simply a "dog bite." Such bites are the most common and are routinely handled in emergency rooms where the patient is treated and released.
2. The second level, "severe dog bite," requires hospitalization. Severe dog bites occur at least 26 times per day across the country, according to the AHRQ study, and are a serious public health and safety concern. Certain dog breeds more commonly inflict these types of injuries. (The site of the injury, however, is also a primary determinant of the need for hospitalization.)
3. A "dog mauling" is the most extreme form of dog injury. It represents a sustained, unrelenting attack during which the animal refuses to stop in a clear attempt to maim or kill its victim. Multiple peer-reviewed studies point to only a few dog breeds that inflict attacks of this nature. All dog mauling victims require trauma level medical procedures in order to survive.

According to DogsBite.org, a national dog bite victims' group, an average of 31 Americans die annually due to dog mauling injuries. In 2012, the highest death rate ever recorded, 38 people perished. Thus far in 2013, January 1st through May 12th, 13 Americans have died due to extreme mauling injuries. Only 2 dog breeds caused these deaths; 12 were the result of attacks by pit bulls.

Johns Hopkins Hospital treated 198 pediatric trauma patients during a period spanning 1991 to 2012, reporting an increase of more than double the 20-year average with a staggering 22 pediatric trauma patients in 2012. The Maryland State Trauma Registry reports 37 trauma level incidents impacted Maryland citizens in 2012. Without today's advanced life-saving medical technologies, the number of human lives lost in life-threatening dog mauling episodes would be much higher.

Understanding the severity levels of dog bite injuries and realizing that the more extreme forms of injury are more commonly perpetrated by certain dog breeds, can help you navigate the public debate about this issue.

Funds raised in the Bowl-a-Thon will be donated to two organizations:

The Johns Hopkins Children's Center for providing advanced trauma medical services for mauling victims
and credited with saving Dominic Solesky's life, and

DogsBite.org for providing the only public education website about dangerous dog breeds
that is not owned or controlled by veterinarians, animal welfare or dog breeding groups.