

Before You Get Bitten

Follow these four steps to avoid cat bites before they happen.

Karen L. Overall, MA, VMD, Ph.D.

Here are some keys to preventing and treating cat-bite problems:

1. Avoid situations in which your cat is likely to respond to petting with biting.
2. Play only with toys; never play with your hands or feet. Never offer human body parts to cats as part of play. If your cat becomes overly aroused when playing with a toy, stop the play before anyone is injured.
3. Never pull your hand or other body parts away when your cat bites. Your cat may think you are playing and try harder to catch a moving body part.
4. Recognize the behaviors your cat exhibits before the behavior starts. Then, use these early warning signs either to redirect your cat to a safe game or remove yourself from your cats view until it returns to normal.

Remember that cats brains are wired differently than those of other animals. Cats can stay reactive and aroused for 24 to 48 hours. Move a very aroused cat into an unoccupied room using heavy cardboard or blankets. Sequestering the cat with water and litter during such periods can protect both your body and your warm feelings toward your cat. The earlier the intervention, the better.

Finally, truly anxious cats may benefit from anti-anxiety medication and behavioral intervention. Behavioral treatment can be as simple as teaching your cat to sit and relax in exchange for a food treat. Medication may actually help animals learn new behaviors faster. The combination can truly tame the emergent tiger in distressed domestic cats.

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