

# Dog saliva 101: 5 lesser-known facts



Perks of being a pet parent? Boundless joy. Unconditional love. Stray hair everywhere. And dog saliva. Tons of it.

Have you ever thought about what makes up this doggie-drool that we find ourselves generously slathered in so often?

With so much misinformation around dog saliva doing the rounds, how about we get our facts straight, once and for all?

**1. Dog saliva helps heal wounds. In dogs, not humans.**



Dog saliva is a natural pain reliever. The moment a dog instinctively licks its wounds, the saliva coats the wound in a thin film and helps reduce pain. And it doesn't just aid in relieving pain. It's been believed from ancient times that dog saliva does help with healing of wounds as well.

The healing properties of dog saliva aren't just anecdotal. Dog saliva actually contains several chemicals that promote healing of wounds. Lysozymes, present in dog saliva are antibacterial and protect dogs from a number of bacteria such as staphylococcus, streptococcus canis, or E. coli. Apart from this, some proteins like histatins, found in dog saliva, are known to bring down the wound healing time and help new skin grow over the wound.

Great. So is it a good idea to let our dogs lick our wounds too?

Well, certainly not. Dog saliva does have a healing effect. But not on human wounds. That in fact puts you at considerable risk of contracting some possibly serious infections. More on this in a bit.

## 2. Excessive salivation can precede barfing



Your dog doesn't just salivate at the sight of that juicy steak on the counter. Sometimes, excessive drooling can also be a sign that your dog is about to lose its lunch.

And why does this happen? The excessive saliva that collects in the mouth and around the teeth just before the act of vomiting actually protects the enamel and the lining of the mouth from getting eroded by the highly acidic gastric juices. Amazing, isn't it?

## 3. It helps cool a hot dog down



Unlike humans, dogs don't have sweat glands and use their saliva to keep their bodies cool. Here's how they do it:

Picture the all-too-familiar scene of a dog on a hot summer day - with its mouth wide open and the tongue hanging outside of it. The saliva in the dog's mouth and on the tongue, evaporates quickly through its open mouth and cools them down. The blood in these areas as a result cools down as well, and is then circulated through its body, reducing the overall core body temperature.

#### **4. It can cause infections and allergies in humans**



A lot of pet-parents assume that their dog's saliva is clean and safe and allow for generous licking, especially around the mouth. Although this is usually not a cause for concern in healthy individuals, but in very young kids, the elderly or immuno-compromised individuals, it could lead to infections getting transmitted from the germs that thrive in a dog's mouth. And these infections can sometimes be quite serious.

Although most microorganisms in a dog's mouth are species-specific, some of the bacteria like clostridium, E. coli, salmonella and campylobacter are in fact, zoonotic, which means that they can be passed on to humans and can cause illnesses.

Another possible concern that has to do with getting licked by your dog is the transmission of parasites like roundworms which are commonly found in dogs and are passed through licking.

Not just this, dog saliva also contains up to 12 different proteins that are known to cause allergies in humans. These proteins from their saliva get transferred to their fur upon licking and become air-borne after drying and these proteins are more often the cause of allergies in humans than doggie dander.

Also, considering the great fondness that our dogs have for dumpster-diving and other such activities, would you really want to let those snouts and whatever they've managed to catch hold of, anywhere near your face?

## **5. Saliva can stain your dog's fur**



If your dog enjoys licking itself when it's bored, and also happens to have a lighter hued coat, over a period of time, it can result in unsightly stains on its fur.

Dog saliva and tears contain porphyrins - molecules that contain iron, formed from the natural process where the body's red blood cells break down. Although most of the porphyrins that the dog's body produces, get excreted with its feces and urine, traces are found in their tears and saliva as well. Constant contact with fur can leave stains on it, over a long time.

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