

FROM

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/prevent-bear-encounters-bear-wise>

Who to contact

Emergencies

Call 911 or your local police, if you feel a bear poses an immediate threat to personal safety and:

- enters a school yard when school is in session
- enters or tries to enter a residence
- wanders into a public gathering
- kills livestock/pets and lingers at the site
- stalks people and lingers at the site

Generally, bears want to avoid humans. Most encounters are not aggressive and attacks are rare.

Non-emergencies

Call the Bear Wise reporting line at [1-866-514-2327](tel:1-866-514-2327) (*between April 1-November 30) if a bear is:

- roaming around, checking garbage cans
- breaking into a shed where garbage or food is stored
- in a tree
- pulling down a bird feeder or knocking over a barbecue
- moving through a backyard or field but is not lingering

How to prevent conflicts with black bears

Bears usually avoid humans. But they are attracted into urban and rural areas to get food. They will topple bird feeders, ransack barbecues, raid garbage cans and even try to enter buildings. If they learn that they can find food where people live, bears will return again and again. Relocation and destruction are poor ways of trying to prevent conflicts with bears.

You can prevent conflicts with bears by following these steps.

Remove bear attractants

When bears pick up a scent with their keen noses, they will investigate it. If they find bird food, garbage or pet food they will return as long as the food source is available.

Garbage

- put garbage out only on the morning of garbage day, not the night before
- put garbage in containers that have tight-fitting lids and store it in a bear-proof location such as your basement or a sturdy garage
- spray garbage cans and lids with bleach or another a strong disinfectant
- take garbage to the dump often, if you do not have curbside pick-up

Avoid bear-human interactions

When out in bear country:

- travel in groups of 2 or more (bears primarily attack people who are alone)
- make noise as you move through areas where visibility is restricted or where background noise is high, such as near streams and waterfalls (e.g., singing, whistling or talking will alert bears to your presence, giving them a chance to avoid you)
- while outdoors, keep your eyes and ears open:
 - scan your surroundings to check for bears
 - do not wear music headphones
 - watch for signs of bear activity (e.g., tracks, claw marks on trees, flipped-over rocks or fresh bear droppings)
 - if you are out with a dog, leash it (uncontrolled, untrained dogs may actually lead a bear to you)
 - pay attention, especially if you are working, gardening or berry picking
 - occasionally scan your surroundings to check for bears
 - rise slowly if you are in a crouched position so that you don't startle nearby bears

Take community action

It takes the local community to prevent conflicts with bears. You may be doing your part, but if your neighbour is not, you may still encounter a bear on your property as a result.

Commit your community to becoming Bear Wise. Remind your neighbours to do their part by:

- sharing this information with your neighbours
- starting the conversation about how you can work together to prevent conflicts with bears (e.g. making sure the whole street waits until morning to put out garbage for collection)

Be prepared

When out in bear country:

- carry a whistle or air horn
- learn how to use bear pepper spray and carry it somewhere that's easy to access

- consider carrying a long-handled axe, if you are in remote areas or deep in the forest
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If you encounter a black bear

Stop. Do not panic. Remain calm.

Quickly assess the situation and try to determine which type of an encounter this might be – sighting, surprise or close encounter.

When bears are caught off guard, they are stressed, and usually just want to flee. Generally, the noisier the bear is, the less dangerous it is, provided you don't approach the bear. The noise is meant to 'scare' you off and acts as a warning signal.

If you see a black bear:

- do not try to get closer to the bear for a better look or picture
- make sure the bear has a clear escape route — don't corner a bear
- always watch the bear and slowly back away until the bear is out of sight
- get inside, if you are near a building or vehicle
- leave the area, if you are berry-picking, hiking, camping, jogging or cycling
- if you are with others, stay together and act as a group
- if the bear does not get closer to you, slowly back away, talking to the bear in a quiet, monotone voice