



# Be safe in bear country.

Black bears live in most parts of Ontario. Chances are wherever you live, visit or spend your leisure time, you will be near bears or bear habitat. For your own personal safety, and for the well being of bears, it is important that you learn about bears and their behaviour. Know how to prevent and handle potential encounters with bears. Be safe, be responsible, be Bear Wise.



In an immediate emergency, call your local police or 911. To report bear problems call:

**1 866 514-2327**

(1 866 514-BEAR)

TTY 705 945-7641

For more information, visit our website:

[ontario.ca/bearwise](http://ontario.ca/bearwise)

Every encounter with a black bear is unique. Experts recommend the following tips and advice. There is no guarantee that what works in one instance will work in another.

**Avoid encounters:**

- Make noise as you move through wooded areas – especially in areas where visibility is restricted or where background noise is high, such as near streams and waterfalls. 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:
  - Do not wear music headphones
  - Watch for signs of bear activity, like 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 undertaking activities like working, gardening or berry picking. Occasionally scan your surroundings to check for bears. Rise slowly from your crouched position so you don't startle any nearby bears. They may not recognize you as a human when you are in a crouched position

**Think about safety:**

- Carry and have readily accessible a whistle or an air horn
- Learn how to carry and use bear pepper spray. Know its limitations
- If you are in "back country" consider carrying a long-handled axe

**Whenever you spot or encounter a black bear:**

- Stop. Do not panic. Remain calm
- Do not try to get closer to the bear for a better look or picture. Never feed a bear
- Do not run, climb a tree or swim
- Quickly assess the situation and try to determine which type of an encounter this might be – sighting, surprise or close encounter
- Always watch the bear. While watching the bear, slowly back away until the bear is out of sight
- If you are near a building or vehicle get inside as a precaution
- If you are berry picking, or enjoying other outdoor activities like hiking, jogging cycling or camping leave the area
- Tell others about bear activity in the area

There's more ... see over!





# What to do if you encounter a bear.

Knowing what to do if you encounter a bear is being Bear Wise. But some encounters may be more dangerous than others, so it's important to recognize the signs, and know what you can do to protect yourself.



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## Know the language of black bears:

If you by chance encounter a black bear it may:

- Stand on its hind legs to get a better look at you
- Salivate excessively, exhale loudly, and make huffing, moaning, clacking and popping sounds with its mouth, teeth and jaws
- Lower its head with its ears drawn back while facing you
- Charge forward, and/or swat the ground with its paws. This is also known as a bluff charge

Generally, the noisier the bear is, the less dangerous it is provided you don't approach the bear. These are all warning signals bears give to let you know you are too close. When bears are caught off guard, they are stressed, and usually just want to flee.

## What to do – Surprise and Close Encounters:

- Remain calm. Do not run. Stand still and talk to the bear in a calm voice
- Arm your pepper spray
- Do not try to get closer to the bear
- If the bear does not get closer to you, slowly back away, talking to the bear in a quiet, monotone voice. Do not scream, turn your back on the bear, run, kneel down or make direct eye contact
- Watch the bear and wait for it to leave
- If the bear does not leave or approaches you, yell and wave your arms to make yourself look bigger. Throw objects, blow a whistle or an air horn. The idea is to persuade the bear to leave
- If you are with others, stay together and act as a group. Make sure the bear has a clear escape route
- If the bear keeps advancing, and is getting close, stand your ground. Use your bear pepper spray (if the bear is within seven metres) or anything else you can find or use to threaten or distract the bear
- Do not run or climb a tree

## About attacks:

Black bear attacks are extremely rare. A black bear may attack if:

- It perceives you to be a threat to it, its cubs or it may be defending food. This is a defensive bear that wants more space between you and it. Such attacks are exceedingly rare although a bear's aggressive display may seem to suggest otherwise
- It is a predatory bear. These bears are also very rare. Predatory attacks usually occur in rural or in remote areas. Predatory bears approach silently, and may continue to approach regardless of your attempts to deter them by yelling or throwing rocks

## What to do if an encounter results in an attack:

- Use your pepper spray
- Fight back with everything you have
- Do not play dead except in the rare instance when you are sure a mother bear is attacking you in defense of cubs

There's more ...  
see over!

