

## What to do if you see a black bear while hiking



Black bears are large, strong wild animals that should be treated with respect. Seeing a black bear can be an exciting, and for some people, a nerve wracking event. Bears should always be appreciated from a distance to ensure the safety of humans and bears. Encounters vary greatly, and all situations are different. Aggressive and predatory behaviors by bears are very rare, but possible, so it is wise to be aware of the bear's behavioral signals for appropriate actions to take. These recommendations are specific to North American black bears.

- Seeing a bear in nature: Black bears are usually wary of people, and normal trail noise will alert the bear of your presence. If you encounter a bear at any time while hiking or camping, talk in a calm voice and slowly back away. Do not approach bears or intrude between a female bear and her cubs. Do not run.
- If a bear were to become aggressive the following actions are recommended: Make yourself look bigger by putting your arms above your head. Continue to repeat "Hey bear" in a calm voice. Back away and leave the area while monitoring the bear.
- If a bear continues to follow you, stand your ground, make yourself look bigger, shout at the bear, threaten the bear with whatever is at hand (bang a stick on the ground, clap your hands), and prepare to use bear pepper spray if it is available. If the bear stops or turns around, back away and leave the area.
- If charged, stand your ground, talk to the bear in a calm voice and use bear pepper spray when available. If the bear makes contact with you, fight back using anything you have (E.g. stick, binoculars, swinging a backpack, kicking, etc.).
- Protect your pets: The presence of a dog could trigger a bear to be aggressive. Keep dogs leashed when hiking and never let dogs chase or interact with bears. Check your surroundings and be mindful while hiking with your dog. If you encounter a bear, keep your dog leashed, back away slowly, and leave the area.

\*The above information is from Mass.gov under "Learn about Black Bears." The site also contains information on protecting your home and property from bears if you're interested.