



Protecting Our Children

Dog Bite Prevention Tips

(NAPSA)—Parents and pet owners are key to preventing dog bites. Each year, dogs bite 4.7 million Americans, 60 percent of which are children. It is essential for parents to teach children how to avoid situations where dogs may attack and for pet owners to follow leash laws and be responsible with their pets.

“Man’s best friend will bite half of all children in the U.S. by the 12th grade,” said James Wells, M.D., president of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS). “Seventy percent of dog bites occur on the dog owner’s property. A dog that attacks is very often the family pet.”

The ASPS offers these tips to prevent dog attacks:

Be a Safety-Smart Dog Owner

- Never leave infants or children alone with a dog.
- Keep the family dog healthy—an unnoticed injury can make a dog aggressive.
- Socialize the dog—treat dogs like part of the family.
- Follow leash laws.

How Children Can Avoid Dog Bites

- Never approach an unfamiliar dog.
- Never run from or scream at a dog.
- Tell an adult if you see a stray dog or a dog acting strangely.
- Never disturb a dog that is sleeping, **eating**, or caring for its puppies.
- Never play aggressive games with dogs.
- Ask permission from a dog’s owner before petting the animal.



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If Bitten

- Children should tell an adult right away.
- Control the bleeding and gently cleanse the bite area with soap and water.
- Get medical help immediately to determine the risk of infection or rabies.
- Because serious dog bites can cause scarring, be sure to ask in the emergency room for a plastic surgeon certified by The American Board of Plastic Surgery.

Said Dr. Wells, “Board-certified plastic surgeons repair thousands of animal bites annually and are qualified to perform reconstructive and cosmetic surgery on the face and all areas of the body.”

For more information on dog bite prevention and to download the “Beware the Bite” children’s activity sheet, visit the ASPS Web site at www.plasticsurgery.org. To find a board-certified plastic surgeon, call 1-888-4-PLASTIC (1-888-475-2784) or visit the ASPS Web site.



Editor’s Note: National Dog Bite Prevention Week is May 18-24, 2003.