

Pointers For Parents

Protecting Children From Dog Bites

(NAPSA)—Every year 4.7 million Americans are bitten by dogs; 60 percent of those victims are children. For children who spend more time outdoors, it's important to teach them how to behave around neighborhood canines.

Teach Children To...

- Ask permission from a dog's owner before petting the animal.
- Never approach an unfamiliar dog.
- Drop to the ground, curl into a ball and cover their heads and faces with their arms if a dog knocks them over.
- Never disturb a dog that is eating, sleeping or caring for puppies.
- Never tease or play too rough with a dog.
- Never play with a dog without allowing it to see and sniff you first.

"Unfortunately, a dog's bark is not always worse than its bite," said Walter Erhardt, MD, president of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS). "Parents need to know how to safeguard their family against dog bites and what to do if a dog attacks."

In an effort to reduce the number of dog attack victims, the ASPS offers these tips:

To Prevent Dog Bites...

- Never leave infants or children alone with a dog.
- Follow leash laws.
- Do not play aggressive games with your dog.
- Keep your dog healthy—an unnoticed injury can make a dog aggressive.
- Do not let dogs run loose—a dog is less likely to bite if its owners train it to interact with people and take it to obedience classes.
- Always supervise children when they play with dogs.

Most dog bites happen to dog owners, their family and friends. As a result of animal bites like these, thousands of reconstructive



Children should know that every dog, no matter how friendly, has the capacity to bite.

surgeries are performed by board-certified plastic surgeons annually.

If a Child is Attacked...

- Try to loosen the dog's grip by pushing your arm against its throat.
- Place something between him or her and the dog, such as a jacket or purse.
- Control the bleeding and wash the wound with soap and water. Get medical help immediately to determine the risk of infection for rabies.

Children attacked by dogs are frequently bitten on the face. Any bite to the face can result in severe lacerations, infection or disability. If a child suffers a serious dog bite that may cause scarring, parents should request a physician certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery. This ensures that the doctor is uniquely qualified to perform reconstructive and cosmetic procedures on the face and all areas of the body.

For more information, call ASPS at (847) 228-9900. To find a certified plastic surgeon or to learn more about reconstructive and cosmetic surgery, call the ASPS Plastic Surgery Information Service at (888) 4-PLASTIC (888-475-2784) or visit www.plasticsurgery.org.

Note to Editors: Although this release can be used year-round, it is particularly appropriate for release during National Dog Bite Prevention Week, May 20-26, 2001.