

Tips to Keep Kids Safe Around Dogs

(StatePoint) Even the cuddliest, fuzziest, sweetest dog can bite if provoked. And most people are bitten by their own dog or one they know, with kids bitten more often than adults.

From nips to bites to attacks, bites are a serious problem. Dog bite victims requiring medical attention in the United States number approximately 800,000 annually -- and 75 percent are children, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Countless more bite injuries go untreated.

“Parents should never leave a young child unsupervised around any dog, even a dog well-known to your family,” says AAP spokesperson Dr. Alison Tothy. “Even very small children should be taught not to tease or hurt animals. And when kids are old enough to go to friends’ houses or out to play without you, they need to know how to minimize the risk of being bitten.”

Here are some tips from the AAP on keeping kids safe around dogs:

- **Wait:** Because many dog bite injuries happen to young children, it’s suggested parents wait to get a dog until children are older than 4.
- **Be Vigilant:** Never leave a baby or small child alone with a dog. Be alert for potentially dangerous situations.
- **Be Cautious:** Teach your child to be cautious around strange dogs and treat your own with respect. Children must be taught not to approach strange dogs. Teach

children not to bother dogs if they’re sleeping, eating or caring for puppies.

- **Ask First:** Teach your children to ask permission from the dog’s owner before petting. Let the dog sniff your child and have your child touch it gently, avoiding the face, head and tail. Never reach through or over a fence to pet a dog. Dogs can be protective of their territory, and may interpret it as a threat.

- **Don’t Run:** Dogs naturally love to chase and catch things. Don’t run past a dog, as this may give the dog a reason to become excited. If an unfamiliar dog comes up to you, try to stay still until the dog leaves, or back away slowly until the dog is out of sight, while avoiding eye contact.

- **Protect Yourself:** If threatened by a dog, remain calm. Avoid eye contact. Stand still until the dog leaves or back away slowly. If knocked down, curl into a ball and protect your face with your hands.

- **Treat Bites Immediately:** If a dog bites your child, clean small wounds with soap and water and seek medical attention for larger wounds. Contact the dog’s veterinarian to check vaccination records.

For more tips to keep children safe, visit www.aap.org.

Many dogs are friendly and make great companions. Even so, you and your family need to act responsibly around them.
