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INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

Never leave dogs, young children alone together

Happiness is a warm puppy. Man's best friend. Most sayings about these furry, four-legged friends are happy ones. Despite dogs' good qualities, even the gentlest ones may bite.

Dogs greet us after a long day and comfort us. They help us enjoy the outdoors and get exercise. However, young children should never be left alone with a dog, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

About a dozen people die from dog bite injuries every year, and children are three times more likely to be bitten than adults. Most people are bitten by their own dog or one they know. About 75% of children are bitten on the head. Children also can suffer from stress after the scary experience.

Parents should teach children to follow these rules so they are safe around dogs:

- Do not yell near a dog.
- Stay still and calm when a strange dog comes toward you.
- Ask permission before petting someone else's dog.
- Never chase a dog.
- Do not stick your hands or fingers through a fence to pet a dog.
- Do not bother a dog when it is eating or sleeping.

A dog is less likely to bite if it is taught to get along with other dogs and people at a young age, trained in basic commands, vaccinated and neutered. Families should wait until



their children are at least 4 years old before getting a dog.

Be especially cautious when introducing pet dogs to new babies. Infants should not be left alone with a dog, even in swings. Dogs have been known to attack babies inside moving infant swings.

If a child is bitten:

- clean the wound thoroughly with soap and water and apply antiseptic cream to avoid infection;
- for deep bites and puncture wounds, apply pressure with a clean bandage to stop the bleeding, wash, dry and cover the wound with a sterile bandage;
- check to see if the dog is up-to-date on its vaccinations; and
- notify your pediatrician that your child has been bitten.

—Trisha Koriath

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