



Canines & Kids – Safe Behavior & Care Sheet

The Unknown Dog

Most dogs are friendly and want to be petted and interact positively with people. But not all dogs are friendly, and it's important for your child's safety to know what they should do when they meet a dog of unknown temperament. Prepare your children for an encounter with a strange dog. Talk about and act out different situations. Teach your children how to approach and pet a dog. Use a stuffed toy and guide their hands.

Introduce yourself to owner and dog: When your children meet a dog they don't know, have them ask the owner, "May I please pet your dog?" If the owner says yes, it may be better to scratch the dog's chest rather than patting the top of his or her head. Don't allow kids to put their face in front of any dog's face. If the dog seems afraid or backs away, leave the dog alone! Let the dog approach you.

Know what an angry dog looks like: Barking, growling, snarling with teeth showing, ears laid flat, legs stiff, tail up, and hair standing up on the dog's back are warning signs! Keep your hands in your pockets and slowly walk away sideways. Don't look into the dog's eyes and don't run! Screaming and waving your arms around (a natural response for a child) will cause the dog to chase. If a dog attacks, curl up in a ball on the ground and protect your face with your hands.

Know when to stay away: Keep a safe distance from a dog that is eating or chewing on a bone. Some dogs will snap if you get too close because they are afraid you will take their food away. Don't go near a mother dog with puppies. She will try to protect them from strangers. Stay away from a dog on a chain or in a fenced yard. The dog may bite to protect themselves because he or she can't get away. Or the dog may be protecting his or her owner and the owner's property. Don't shout, run around or reach at dogs through open fences, doors or windows. Never try to break up a dog fight. Teach your children to stay away from the fight and find an adult to help.

Know what to do when bitten: Your child needs to tell an adult right away. Try to remember what the dog looked like, if the dog had a collar on, and where the dog went after the bite. Wash the wound with soap and water as bite wounds can easily get infected. Take your child to a doctor and report the bite to the proper law enforcement authorities.