CHICAGO – The American Society for Reconstructive Microsurgery and the American Academy of Pediatrics have joined forces with the U.S. Postal Service, non-profit community, insurance industry and veterinarians to educate the public that dog bites are a serious health issue and are avoidable. According to the Centers for Disease Control, approximately 4.7 million Americans are bitten by dogs annually - more than half of whom are children. Over the past five years, dog bite injuries are reported to be the 11th leading cause of nonfatal injury in children ages 0-14 in America.

“As pediatricians, we see the injuries dog bites can cause,” said Sandra Hassink, MD, FAAP, president of the AAP. “In addition to teaching children about safety when riding their bike or walking to school, it’s important to educate them about how to stay safe around dogs.”

Dog Bite Prevention Week is an ideal time to educate children and adults on how to handle, train and treat dogs. If you are considering getting a dog, talk with a veterinarian about choosing a dog that will fit in well with your family. As a dog owner, you should socialize your new pet, train your dog with commands, vaccinate your dog against rabies and other diseases, and neuter your dog, as they are less likely to bite.

The American Humane Association reports that 66 percent of bites among children occur to the head and neck. In 2014 approximately 28,500 reconstructive procedures were done to repair dog bites, as reported by the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, which is a 6 percent increase since 2013.

“Even the friendliest dog may bite when startled or surprised. Be cautious; once a child is scarred they are scarred for life,” said Gregory R. D. Evans, MD, FACS, president of the ASRM. “Most children love dogs and like to put their faces up close to the dog’s face. Parents should never permit this. Injuries to the face and hands can be disfiguring or disabling and require prompt, expert medical attention.”

The ASRM and AAP joined this coalition to raise awareness and help prevent devastating, life-changing injuries from dog bites. Medical experts suggest steps you can take to protect your family from a dog bite:

- Never leave a baby or small child alone with a dog.
- Teach your child to see if the dog is with an owner and looks friendly. Then ask the owner for permission to pet the dog. Let the dog sniff your child and have your child touch the dog gently, avoiding the face, head and tail.
- Tell your child not to bother a dog if it is sleeping, eating or caring for puppies.
- Tell your child not to run past a dog.

If you're threatened by a dog, remain calm. Avoid eye contact. Stand still until the dog leaves or back away slowly. If you are knocked down, curl into a ball and protect your face with your hands. If you are bitten by a dog take the following steps immediately:
• Rinse the bite area with soapy water.
• Elevate limb(s) that have been bitten.
• For deeper bites or puncture wounds, apply pressure with a clean bandage or towel to stop the bleeding. Then wash the wound, dry it and cover with a sterile dressing. Don’t use tape or butterfly bandages to close the wound.
• It’s a good idea to call your child’s physician because a bite could require antibiotics or a tetanus shot. The doctor also can help you to report the incident.
• If your child is bitten severely, call 9-1-1 or go to the emergency room.
• When going to the emergency room, advise the personnel of:
  o your tetanus vaccination status;
  o vaccine status of the dog;
  o who the dog owner is; and,
  o If the dog has bitten before.

Advice from the Experts
Note: Journalists are encouraged to contact National Dog Bite Prevention Week partners for in-depth interviews.

Coalition Partners:


American Society for Reconstructive Microsurgery
The American Society for Reconstructive Microsurgery is an organization of more than 700 surgeons board certified in plastic, orthopaedic or general surgery that perform microsurgery and other complex reconstructive surgeries. The ASRM is dedicated to promoting, encouraging and advancing the art and science of microsurgery and other complex reconstructions through education and research.
Contact: Krista Greco, kristagreco@isms.org, www.microsurg.org, 312-456-9579

American Academy of Pediatrics
The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 62,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults. For more information, visit www.aap.org or follow us on Twitter @AmerAcadPeds. Information for parents is available on www.healthychildren.org.

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