DOCTORS: HOW NOT TO BE A DOG BITE VICTIM

CHICAGO—Four national medical organizations are teaming up to raise awareness during National Dog Bite Prevention Week, May 15-21. It’s estimated that 4.7 million people are bitten by dogs every year. Yet most dog bites are entirely preventable through training, proper control of dogs, and education.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS), the American Society for Reconstructive Microsurgery (ASRM), and the American Society of Maxillofacial Surgeons (ASMS) are concerned about dog bite injuries among patients of all ages. Children are the most common victims, followed by seniors and mail carriers. Every year about 600,000 children require medical attention for dog bites. Children are more than three times as likely to be bitten as adults. Some of these injuries can be serious, so prevention programs are important.

On Thursday, May 12, these organizations will join the United States Postal Service (USPS), the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), the Insurance Information Institute (III), and Prevent the Bite at a kick-off event at City Hall in Houston, TX. Popular TV dog trainer Victoria Stillwell will give advice on dog behavior, and the local Bureau of Animal and Regulator Care will be on hand to provide demonstrations of proper interaction with dogs.

“Half of all children will be bitten by a dog by the time they are high school seniors,” said John Fraser, MD, FAAP, an injury prevention specialist who will represent the Texas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics at the Houston event. “Every year about 600,000 children require medical attention for dog bites. As a pediatrician who has treated some of these kids, I want to do everything I can to prevent these injuries.”

Plastic surgeons, including reconstructive microsurgeons and maxillofacial surgeons, often treat victims of dog attacks and see firsthand how devastating these injuries can be. According to ASPS statistics, nearly 33,000 reconstructive procedures on dog bites were performed in 2010, up eight percent from 2009.

“Unfortunately, the majority of reconstructive surgeries to treat dog bites are performed on children,” said ASPS President Phillip Haeck, MD. “Children are frequently bitten on the face, which can result in severe lacerations, infection and permanent scarring. Members of the ASPS, ASRM, and ASMS strongly urge children and adults to follow the recommended tips to help prevent attacks.”

To help educate the public about dog bites, the AAP, USPS and AVMA offer a brochure, “What you should know about dog bite prevention,” with tips on how to avoid being bitten, what dog owners can do to prevent their dogs from biting and how to treat dog bites. For more information on National Dog Bite Prevention Week and to access the brochure online, visit www.avma.org/press/publichealth/dogbite/mediakit.asp.
Important dog bite prevention tips include:

* Pick a dog that is good match for your home. Consult your veterinarian for details.
* Socialize your pet. Gradually expose your puppy to a variety of people and other animals so it feels at ease in these situations; continue this exposure as your dog gets older.
* Train your dog. Commands can build a bond of obedience and trust between the dog and owner. Avoid aggressive games with your dog.
* Vaccinate your dog against rabies and other diseases.
* Neuter or spay your dog. These dogs are less likely to bite.
* Never leave a baby or small child alone with a dog.
* Teach your child to ask a dog owner for permission before petting any dog.
* Let a strange dog sniff you or your child before touching it, and pet it gently, avoiding the face and tail.
* Never bother a dog if it is sleeping, eating or caring for puppies.
* Do not run past a dog.
* If a dog threatens you, remain calm. Avoid eye contact. Stand still or back away slowly until the dog leaves. If you are knocked down, curl into a ball and protect your face with your arms and fists.

If bitten, request proof of rabies vaccination from the dog owner, get the owner’s name and contact information, and contact the dog’s veterinarian to check vaccination records. Then immediately consult with your doctor. Clean bite wounds with soap and water as soon as possible. If the victim is bleeding from a bite wound, apply pressure with a clean bandage or towel to stop the bleeding before washing, and immediately take the person to a doctor or emergency room.

As Dr. Fraser reminds parents, “With school almost over for the year, children will be spending more time in parks, at friends’ houses, and other places where they may encounter dogs, which makes this an especially important time to think about safety.”

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**Please Note:** For broadcast quality video and audio, photo stills and other media resources, visit the USPS Newsroom at [www.usps/news](http://www.usps/news).

*The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 60,000 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.* [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)

For more information, please visit the Web sites of the following organizations:

The American Society of Plastic Surgeons is the largest organization of board-certified plastic surgeons in the world. Representing more than 7,000 physician members, the Society is recognized as a leading authority and information source on cosmetic and reconstructive plastic surgery. ASPS comprises more than 94 percent of all board-certified plastic surgeons in the United States. Founded in 1931, the Society represents physicians certified by The American
Board of Plastic Surgery or The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.  
www.plasticsurgery.org

The American Society for Reconstructive Microsurgery (ASRM) is an organization of more than 600 surgeons 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.  www.microsurg.org

The American Society of Maxillofacial Surgeons is the oldest organization representing maxillofacial plastic surgeons. The Society accomplishes its mission to advance the science and practice of surgery of the facial region and the craniofacial skeleton through excellence in education and research, and advocacy on behalf of patients and practitioners.  www.maxface.org

Prevent the Bite’s mission is to prevent dog bites to children through education. Visit www.preventthebite.org for more information.