

TAKING THE BITE OUT OF YOUR HOLIDAY SEASON

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With the holiday season in full swing, I think now is the time to look at ways to keep your family safe from dog bites. Hopefully, after reading these safety tips, everyone will put these suggestions to use, whether they are considering buying a puppy as a gift, currently own a dog or will be visiting persons whom have a dog.

For those who are considering buying/adopting a puppy/dog as a gift:

- #1- It is best to give a gift certificate, possibly with a photo of the puppy attached, for a gift and wait until after the holiday festivities are over, before actually picking up the puppy. Moving in with a new family can be traumatic on a puppy, let alone moving in with a family in the midst of holiday chaos.**
- #2- Consult with a veterinarian or other professional to determine a breed that will match your families lifestyle and environment. Certain breeds of dogs are more prone to be aggressive, this should also be considered before choosing a puppy for a family pet.**
- #3- Spend time with the puppy before buying or adopting. Your veterinarian can give you information on choosing a dog that is not exhibiting aggressive behaviors.**
- #4- Make sure your pet is socialized as a young puppy, so it feels at ease around other people and animals. Expose your puppy to different situations a little at a time and continue this as your puppy gets older. Don't put your puppy in a situation where it feels threatened or teased.**
- #5- Don't play aggressive games with your puppy, which will cause your puppy to behave in an aggressive manner. Also, don't praise a dog, when they bark or act in an aggressive manner towards strangers.**
- #6- Teach your puppy commands like, sit, stay and no. This will help your puppy to be an obedient dog.**
- #7- Neuter your dog, neutered dogs are less likely to bite.**

For those with children, including toddlers, you should teach your children the following to help them avoid being bitten. Also, it is good for an adult to know the following things, to avoid being bitten:

- #1- Never leave a baby or small child alone with a dog.**
- #2- Never approach a strange dog. Children should be taught to ask permission from a dog's owner before petting a dog.**
- #3- Never disturb a dog that is caring for puppies, sleeping or eating.**
- #4- If a dog approaches to sniff you, stay still. In most cases, the dog will go away when it determines you are not a threat.**
- #5- If you're threatened by a dog, remain calm. Don't scream. If you speak, speak calmly and firmly. Avoid eye contact. Try to stay still until the dog leaves, or back away slowly, until the dog is out of sight. Don't turn and run.**
- #6- If you fall or are knocked to the ground, curl into a ball with your hands over your head and neck. Protect your face.**

Sometimes even if you follow all the rules, you or your child may still be bitten. Here are

some tips on what to do next:

- #1- Have the dog confined immediately, away from the scene of the bite.**
- #2- Wash wounds with soap and water. Consult with your physician on risk of rabies and other infections. Call 911 if emergency treatment is call for.**
- #3- If a dog bites you or your child, and you are not sure who the dog belongs to, call the police and give a description of the dog, along with where you last saw the dog. This will assist animal-control in locating the dog.**
- #4- Call the local police, if your dog bites someone, for local ordinances regarding the reporting of dog bites.**
- #5- If it is your dog, consult with your veterinarian for advice that will prevent similar problems in the future.**
- #6- Report the bite to your insurance company, if it is your dog.**

The AVMA (American Veterinary Medical Association) web site (www.avma.org) was used as a resource, for the writing of this article!