PREVENTING DOG BITEs

Dogs are wonderful companions, but even the cutest, cuddliest and sweetest dog can bite if provoked. Of the nearly 4.5 million people bitten by dogs each year, more than half who require medical attention are children. In addition, dog bite wounds rank third only to bicycle and baseball/softball injuries as a leading cause of emergency admission of children to hospitals according to the Journal of the American Medical Association. Most people are bitten by their own dog or one they know and there is little scientific evidence to support claims of the media or rumors that certain breeds of dogs are more likely to bite. Fortunately, there are steps that can be taken to prevent dog bite injuries.

Here are some basic safety precautions:

- Never leave a baby or small child alone with a dog.
- Be alert for potentially dangerous situations, and be especially cautious around dogs you do not know.
- Always ask permission from a dog’s owner before approaching or petting their dog.
- Never reach over or through a fence to pet a dog as it could be seen as a threat to the dog’s property.
- Do not disturb a dog that is eating, sleeping or caring for its pups.
- Remain still if a dog approaches to sniff (it will usually go away when it learns you are not a threat).
- Stay as calm as possible if you feel threatened by a dog. Do not scream or yell, but speak calmly and firmly if you say anything at all. Again, try to stay still until the dog leaves or back away slowly until the dog is out of sight. Avoid eye contact with the dog and avoid turning your back and running.
- Always walk, rather than run, past dogs as they naturally love to catch and chase things.
- If you do get knocked down by a dog, roll into a ball and try to be still.

Here are some tips if you have a dog or are considering adding a dog to your family:

- Carefully consider the responsibility of owning a pet and selecting a pet to meet your family’s lifestyle.
- Socialize your dog throughout their lifetime, starting as a young puppy if possible, so it feels at ease around other people and animals. Utilize your dog’s veterinarian as a resource for advice about dog behavior and training.
- Train your dog to obey basic commands and avoid games like wrestling or tug-of-war with your dog.
- If possible, it is suggested to wait until your children are 4 years or older to add a dog to the family.
- Keep your dog healthy by taking it to regular health checks and keeping up-to-date on vaccines and parasite control. How your dog feels is directly related to how it behaves.
- Be a responsible pet owner, licensing your dog as required by your city, obeying leash laws and ensuring fence gates are secure if your dog is kept in a fenced yard.
- Always be attentive to your dog, watching for signs your dog is feeling ill, uncomfortable, threatened, teased or behaving aggressively and remove it from the situation.

Dogs can be great a great addition to your family if you commit to being a responsible owner and children and adults can stay safe and have fun with dogs as long as they learn some basic precautions.

Health Recipe: Veggie Pizza

Whole wheat English muffin
2 Tablespoons low-fat cream cheese
½ cup diced fresh veggies
Reduced-fat shredded mozzarella cheese

Split English muffins and top each half with 1 tablespoon low-fat cream cheese. Wash and dice fresh veggies (such as broccoli, red pepper, carrots, etc.), adding them on top of cream cheese. Sprinkle with mozzarella and enjoy. Let kids help by adding veggies, making them into different funny faces if they wish.

Activity: Downward Dog for Sweet Dreams (Bedtime Yoga Routine)

Adapted from Laurie Jordan; as cited by: http://life.gaiam.com/article/bedtime-yoga-kids-good-night-s-sleep

Incorporate a couple simple yoga poses into your child’s bedtime routine to help him or her release stress from the day and relax into a restful night’s sleep.

1. Greet the Moon: Begin standing nice and tall; stretch arms overhead; fold down at waist towards toes; slowly come back up to standing reaching arms overhead; release arms to side; repeat 3 times
2. Candlestick: Begin by lying on back and extend both legs towards ceiling; focus eyes on toes and take 5 full breaths
3. Hugs: Begin by lying on back; hug knees to chest and have your child squeeze out all of the tension from every muscle in his or her body; release so the body feels light and relaxed; complete 1 time.
4. Spaghetti Test: Gently wiggle your child’s arms and legs to make sure they are relaxed; begin by holding feet and wiggling legs and end with holding hands and wiggling arms to release any last bit of tension.
5. Wishing Star: To help clear your child’s mind from stressful thoughts and prepare for sleep, simply have your child lie on his or her back, close their eyes and imagine a star.