



SAFETY TIPS FOR
Children with Pets



A Program to Help Keep Children
Safe and Injury-Free.

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SAFETY TIPS FOR *Children with Pets*

*It is a good idea
is at least 5 years*

You can help prevent injuries:

- Choose your pet carefully.
- Supervise your child around pets.
- Teach your child how to act around animals.

Keep your pet from causing injuries

Take your dog to obedience classes. Everyone in your family should go to the classes. Teach the dog to obey commands from everyone in your family.

Cats do not smother babies by lying on them (this is an old myth). But cats can scratch. Keep your cat's claws trimmed short. Teach your child to stroke a cat softly from head to tail. Never try to roll a cat over to rub its stomach.

Teach your child how to act around animals:

- Walk slowly near animals. Never run up to an animal or away from it.
- Never disturb an animal that is eating, sleeping, or chewing on something.
- Always ask the owner before touching any pet.
- Pet an animal safely. Start with your arm straight down at your side. Then, lift your arm up slowly and let the pet sniff your hand. Next, gently touch the side and then the top of the pet's head. Never place your hand on top of a pet's head right away. That can be dangerous.
- Stop if you are approached by an animal. Speak softly to it and back away slowly.
- Never tease or stare at an animal.
- Never grab an animal by the feet, ears, or tail.
- Never touch or pick up a wild or stray animal.
- Stay away from all baby animals.
- Learn what an angry animal looks like. Stay away from angry animals.
- Never try to break up an animal fight.



*to wait until your child
old before you get a pet.*



How To Choose A Pet

Dogs

Choose a dog that is calm and patient. You can spay or neuter a dog to make it less aggressive. Dogs trained to be aggressive or to work as guard dogs may be dangerous to children. Do not choose a dog like this as your family pet.

Cats

Choose a cat that is calm and likes to be petted. Cats that seem nervous, unfriendly, or unpredictable do not make good pets for children.

Small animals

Small animals such as hamsters, guinea pigs, gerbils, and rabbits can make good household pets. However, they are not good for families with very young children. Small animals can be easily hurt if dropped or squeezed. They may bite if they are startled or hurt.

Fish

Fish can be fun for children to watch. Place a fish tank where children cannot climb up, fall in, or pull the tank over on themselves.

Reptiles

Reptiles such as snakes, lizards, and salamanders are not good pets for

children. Turtles are not safe either. Turtles can pass along salmonella bacteria to your child.

SAFETY TIPS FOR *Children with Pets*



Safety Check

- Always supervise children around dogs and other animals. Children under 5 will not always understand or remember instructions. Keeping them safe is still an adult's job!
- Do not leave your baby or young child alone with a pet.
- Keep your pet's food and toys away from your child.
- Train your dog to obey commands from all members of your family.

DID YOU KNOW ...

- *Dog bites are usually caused by an animal the child knows. Nearly half of the dog bites seen in emergency departments happened with the family pet in the child's own home.*
- *Most dog bites happen on the face and arms.*
- *Pets can be jealous. Watch your pet closely if you have a new baby in the house. Try to give your pet as much love and attention as you did before the baby came.*



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Safety Tips are a series of fact sheets about children under 5 produced by Safe Start, the injury prevention program of BC's Children's Hospital, in co-operation with Save-On-Foods, Overwatea Foods, Safe Kids Canada, and the Canadian Institute of Child Health. For more information, contact Safe Start at (604) 875-3273 or online at www.cw.bc.ca/safestart or visit www.safekidscanada.ca. These Safety Tips may be photocopied, but only in their original format. *Produced 2003.*

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