

Walk
NEBRASKA

Walk Safely with a Loyal Companion

To keep yourself walking routinely, remember that dogs and kids are great personal trainers, always ready to go and appreciative of your attention. While parents may talk to their child about safety, walks are the perfect time to reinforce road safety. Just remember, children are always watching what we do and learning by our example. Encourage a child to be active by walking with them and teaching them pedestrian safety.

Remember basic safety whenever you walk, even with a loyal friend. See the April newsletter, *Stay Safe When Walking with Traffic*, for basic walking safety tips. Here are a few more:

- Carry a cell phone (for 911 calls), identification, insurance card, and dog ID.
- To deter criminals, avoid isolated areas and act alert and assertive. A walker distracted by a cell phone or headphones is an easy target.
- Wear sunscreen after the first 10 minutes of sunshine for the day.
- On longer walks take a back pack supplied with: water bottle (collapsible dish for pet), healthy snacks such as apples or granola bars, extra socks for wet feet, hat or visor, sun screen, small first aid kit, and a jacket.

Tips for walking with a child:

- Keep children away from traffic. On sidewalks, walk between your child and the street.
- Always yield to autos. Talk about traffic safety with your child.
- Cross streets and roads at safe places--intersections with green lights or crosswalks—be a good role model. Look both ways twice. Make eye contact with the driver and hold hands with your child as you cross.
- Discuss what you see as you walk, especially things from nature. Vary your route but choose routes that are frequented by walkers, runners and bicyclists. Take binoculars and a camera to record the memorable moments.
- Plan an alternate return path for a quick retreat if the child gets tired. Gradually progress to longer walks.

Tips for walking with dogs:

- Keep your dog on a leash. Use a pinch collar, harness or retractable leash. Dogs walking in public places need to be obedience trained and calm around other dogs.
- Be alert when another walker with a dog approaches. Step back from the trail until they pass. If you encounter a dog without an owner, keep your hands close to your chest and walk confidently past. This may be the time when you need pepper spray for protection.
- Carry a plastic bag for a pooper scooper—cover your hand with the bag, pick up the droppings with the covered hand, slide the bag down over the end of that hand to enclose the droppings, tie the bag shut and dispose in a trash receptacle.
- Watch for heat stroke symptoms and provide rest under a tree for your companion. Dogs don't sweat so they need frequent drinks on hot days.
- If your dog is small be prepared to carry him or her in a backpack or your arms.

Sources:

Safe Kids Worldwide. *Latest Trends in Child Pedestrian Safety*, October 2007. <http://www.safekids.org/safety-basics/safety-resources-by-risk-area/pedestrian/> (retrieved May 4, 2010).

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