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PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN

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JULY 2012

THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: THUNDERSTORMS

Summer thunderstorms are a normal part of summer weather. When the sky starts to darken and the thunder begins, do you have a child who gets scared? The weather can change very quickly in the summer — from bright sunny skies, to dark scary clouds. All of the lightning, thunder and maybe even a flicker or two of the lights can sometimes make children a little frightened. Just think of how many scary stories start with “On a dark and stormy night...”

To help children who get frightened during storms, there are three things you can do to help them feel better:

- Talk about what happens during a storm
- Make a plan to stay safe during a storm
- Encourage your child to stay calm

Talk about what happens during a storm

Thunderstorms can be very loud and flashy — but there is a reason for the lightning and thunder. Basically, it is just science at work. Lightning is made when there is water and electricity passing through the clouds. When there is lightning, the electricity heats up the sky and creates the noise called thunder. Talking about the science behind

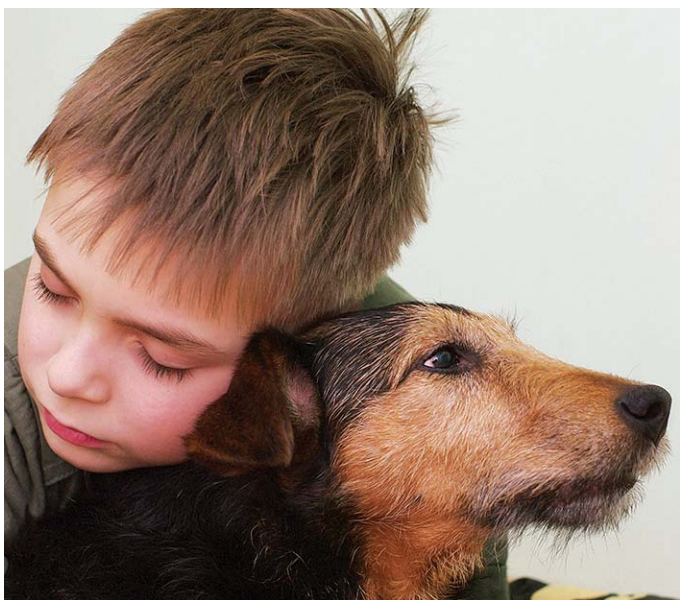


the storm may help ease the fears for a child. There are many ways to find out more about storms, if you have a child who is scared. Look for books at the library related to the weather and thunderstorms. If you have access to the internet, spend a little time looking up the science behind thunderstorms.

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A pet can help ease a child's fear of a thunderstorm.



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Make a plan to stay safe during a storm

Sometimes storms seem to come out of nowhere. If you and your child have talked about what to do when the sky looks like it is going to storm, it may help ease fears. Remember you and your child should always go inside during a storm. Many kids are afraid of the lightning. Lightning strikes do not happen very often, but it is important to be safe.

Here are some tips you and your child should follow when a thunderstorm is coming:

- If your child and you are in water, you both should get out quickly. This includes any pool, lake, ocean, creek or other body of water. Electricity is in the lightning and can move through water. You want to be clear of it during a storm.
- If you and your child are outside, you should try to get into a building or house. If there is no building or house, wait for the storm to pass in a car.
- Talk with your child about what to do if caught in a thunderstorm. Sit down and make a plan.

- If you are going on a camping trip or other outdoor trip, you may want to look at the forecast to see if there is a chance of storms. You will have a plan in place if a storm should occur. Talk it through with your child so that he or she knows the plan.

Encourage your child to stay calm

A storm can be very scary for a child even when he or she is safe inside. Finding ways to calm your child is important. What do you think would make your child feel better? For some children, a simple quiet time with mom or dad will soothe the worry. For some children, having the family cat or dog to pet will help ease fear of the storm.

Other things you may want to suggest to your child:

- Listening to favorite music
- Reading a book
- Playing a board game
- Working on an arts and crafts project

Once the storm is over, take a step outside and see if you and your child can spot a rainbow!

REFERENCES:

- Nemours KidsHealth.org Thunderstorms Reviewed September 2011.
<http://kidshealth.org/kid/watch/out/thunderstorms.html>

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BULLETIN**
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Stock images: 123RF.com

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