

# Be There, Be Aware: The TDV Team Safety Mantra

Ask Isa . . .



## Ask Isa

—Isa Helfrich, German Shepherd & therapy dog  
(typed by Deb Helfrich, Training & Testing Officer)

### Question:

How do I avoid all those safety hazards when making visits?

### Answer:

Remember the TDV safety mantra: Be THERE, be AWARE!

When I work with new therapy dog teams, the emphasis is on SAFETY during visits. Handlers have a tremendous responsibility—keeping their dogs, and everyone their dog interacts with, from harm WHILE providing an amazing opportunity to brighten someone's day.

Don't let your dog ingest something harmful. Don't let your dog get tangled in medical equipment. Don't let your dog jump up on, or paw, anyone. Watch your dog's reactions and behavior. Watch that the patient doesn't grab your dog's collar, or worse. Watch out for wheelchairs rolling on dog toes. Watch, watch, listen, see...the list of safety hazards can be daunting.

And, then we tell you, relax and enjoy your visit?!?!? But, what it boils down to is being proactive and aware.

You can avoid pretty much any hazard on a visit by *staying close* to your dog (being RIGHT THERE as your dog makes visits--not out at the end of the leash, four feet away) and being AWARE of your surroundings (scan the floor for pills, look at the patient's bed for tubes, watch where your dog's mouth and feet are...).

So, remember for safety: **BE THERE AND BE AWARE!!!!!!**

The "Ask Isa" column appears in the Therapy Dogs of Vermont newsletter —reproduced here for TDV website readers. It is not meant as a substitute for seeking proper veterinary, training, or behavioral advice from professionals!

