

Back-to-School Safety

Help keep your children safe from unintentional injury – the number one killer of kids – by teaching them safe ways to travel to and from school. Nationally, pedestrian injuries are a leading cause of unintentional death among children ages 5 to 14, and the back-to-school season provides a great opportunity to teach kids common sense safety behavior.

Walking to School

- Choose the safest route and walk it with your children. Look for the most direct route with the fewest street crossings. Try to choose routes where school safety patrols will be present. (Check with your school if you're not sure.) Children under age 10 should walk with an adult or older child every day because they do not have the necessary skills to judge the speed or distance of oncoming traffic. Also, their peripheral vision is 1/3 less than that of adults.
- Teach children to obey all traffic signals and markings. Children should be taught the meaning of all traffic markers (for example, a flashing "walk" sign is not an automatic "go" signal).
- Make sure children look to the left, to the right and to the left again for moving vehicles before crossing the street.
- Teach children not to enter the street from between parked cars or from behind bushes or shrubs. Darting into the street accounts for a significant number of pedestrian injuries among children ages 9 and under.
- Because drivers have a more difficult time seeing pedestrians, warn children to be extra alert in bad weather.
- Be a good role model. Children imitate their parents and model their behavior. Your children need you to tell them and show them how to be safe pedestrians.

School Bus Safety

More than 25 children each year die in pedestrian accidents involving school buses. In fact, three times as many children are killed in school bus accidents while getting on or off the bus than while riding it.

Teach your children about the 10-foot danger zone around the school bus, where the driver can't see children on the ground. Young children should take eight giant steps away from the bus to be sure that the bus driver can see them. Older kids who must cross the street should look to the bus driver for an "OK" sign before crossing, and always cross in front of the bus.

Kids tend to run toward the bus — don't let them. Kids should stand on the grass or sidewalk while waiting for the bus and not enter the street until the driver has opened the door of the bus.

While on the bus, children should observe the following safety rules:

- The bus driver and others cannot see you if you are standing within 10 feet of the bus. Stay out of the danger zone!
- If something falls under or near the bus, tell the driver. Never try to pick it up yourself.
- When you get on or off the bus, look for the bus safety lights and make sure they are flashing.
- Be alert to traffic. When you get on or off the bus, look left, right, left before you enter or cross the street.
- Remain seated at all times and keep the aisles clear.
- Don't throw objects. Don't shout or distract the driver unnecessarily.
- Keep your head and arms inside the bus at all times.

Source: *Safe Kids Worldwide*