

TIP #8: KIDS ON THE MOVE: WALKING AND BIKING SAFELY

LEARNING TO BE TRAFFIC SMART

Children in kindergarten through third grades (5 to 10 years old) are learning to become independent. They enjoy walking, riding bikes, and playing outside. They don't have the judgement to cope with traffic by themselves yet, but they can begin to understand safety rules.

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW:

- Parents often think their children are able to handle traffic safely by themselves before they are actually ready.
- Children don't have the skills to handle these risky situations until about age 10.
- Boys are much more likely than girls to be injured or killed in traffic, on average boys take more risks.
- Bicycles are vehicles. Children should not ride bikes in the road until they fully understand traffic rules and show they can follow them.
- Children often act before thinking and may not do what parents or drivers expect.
- Children assume that if they see the driver, the driver sees them.
- Children can't judge speed and they think cars can stop instantly.
- Children are shorter than adults and can't see over cars, bushes, and other objects.



Many children are hit by cars when running into the street.

WALKING RISKS

Nearly one-third of the 5 to 9 year old children killed by motor vehicles are on foot. They are hit by cars most often when playing near home. They tend to run into the street in the middle of the block, where drivers don't expect them (A).

BICYCLING RISKS

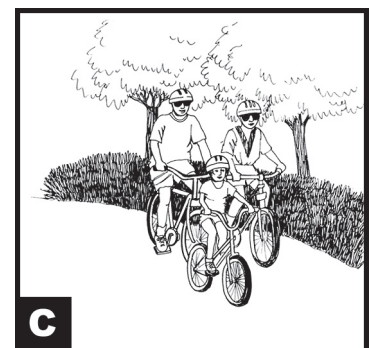
Children can be hurt riding on or off the road. Most children who are killed in bike crashes are 7 to 12 years old. The most serious injuries children get while biking are head and brain injuries. These injuries can cause death or lifelong disability.

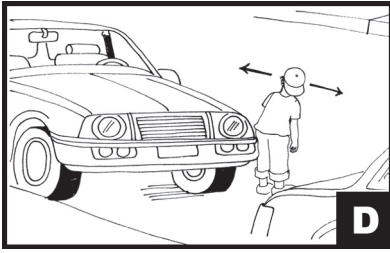


Hold your child's hand so she/he doesn't run into the street.

TAKE THESE STEPS TO SAFETY:

- **Set limits for your child**
As your children grow, set appropriate limits on where they can walk or bike safely. Don't expect them to be responsible or to start to behave safely until about age 10.
- **Teach safe walking habits**
Begin to teach your child how to cross streets safely (see next page). Give them plenty of chances to practice when you are with them (B).
- **Find safe places for bicycling and walking**
Find places away from streets, driveways, and parking lots. Good choices are fenced yards, parks, trails/paths, or playgrounds.
- **Set an example yourself**
Young children learn by watching their parents and other adults. Cross streets properly and always wear a helmet when you ride a bike (C). When you are driving, obey speed limits, wear your safety belt and watch for children. Allow your children the opportunity to practice safe walking and riding when you are with them.

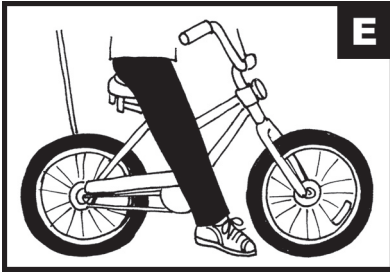




Show older children how to look both ways and around parked cars or objects blocking his/her view.

TEACH THE “SAFE STREET CROSSING” METHOD. TEACH YOUR CHILD TO:

- Cross with an adult or older friend. (Young children still need supervision around traffic up to about age 10).
- Cross at an intersection where there are signals.
- Use the crosswalk when crossing near a corner. Watch for turning vehicles.
- Stop at the curb. Look left, right, left, and over your shoulder for traffic. Continue to look as you cross the street.
- Stop to look around parked cars or other objects that block the view of traffic (D). Let oncoming traffic pass, then look again before crossing. as you cross.
- Make eye contact with drivers to make sure they see you.



A child should be able to have his/her feet flat on the ground when sitting on the bike seat.

HELP YOUR CHILD BIKE SAFELY:

■ A kid-size bike is right

A big bike “to grow into” is not easy to learn on or to ride safely. A child should be able to sit on the seat with knees straight and feet flat on the ground (E). Also make sure the child can straddle the bike with at least one or two inches between the top bar and the child’s crotch.

■ Insist on bike helmet use

A brain injury cannot be cured! Bike helmets can reduce the risk of head injury by 85 percent when worn correctly. Make it clear to your child that she/he must wear a helmet on every ride. It also is important to wear a helmet when doing other sports, like in-line skating and skateboarding.



SELECTING AND FITTING A BIKE HELMET

- Every new helmet must meet the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) Standard and display a label stating that it meets the standard. On older helmets, look for a CPSC , ASTM¹, ANSI², or Snell³ sticker inside the helmet.
- Use foam pads inside to fit the helmet snugly so it doesn’t move on the head.
- Fit the helmet so the front is two finger widths above the eyebrows. Teach your child to wear their helmet the correct way (F).
- Adjust the two side straps so they meet in a “V” right under each ear.
- Adjust the chin strap snugly under the chin. Make it tight enough so the helmet pulls down when the child opens his mouth.
- Check often to make sure straps stay snug and the helmet stays level on the head.

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO WEAR HIS/HER HELMET

- Let your child help choose the helmet.
- Explain that a helmet is “just part of the gear,” as it is with football, race car driving, or hockey.
- Praise your child for wearing his/her helmet.
- Talk to other parents, so that all neighborhood families encourage the same safety rules.
- Be a role model and wear your bike helmet.

¹American Society for Testing and Materials

²American National Standards Institute

³Snell Memorial Foundation

Correct helmet fit is very important!