

Pedestrian safety

Information for parents and caregivers

Children killed or injured whilst walking on roads, footpaths, driveways, or shopping centre car parks, are a significant safety problem in Australia. Every week a child pedestrian is killed. For each child who dies from injuries they received from being knocked over by a car, 25 children are admitted to hospital. Head and internal injuries are common amongst children hit by cars. Because of this, many children have long term health problems, or lifelong disabilities.

Why children are most at risk

Children grow up quickly, and constantly surprise parents with what they can do and how responsible they are becoming. However, children are not ready to be left alone around traffic until they are at least 10 years old. This is because they:

- Do not fully understand the dangers and risks involved.
- Have not fully developed their peripheral vision.
- Can be impulsive and unpredictable.
- Have not yet developed the ability to judge how far away a car is, and how quickly it is approaching.
- Can be difficult for drivers to see, due to their size.
- Think about things that are important to them at the time, and can forget about looking out for cars.
- Imitate adult's and older children's behaviour.
- Children may behave differently when they are with other children.
- Children may 'freeze' if they find themselves in the path of a car, rather than jumping out of the way.

Whilst we can teach children about road safety, and being careful around cars, parents need to be cautious about expecting a child less than 10 years old to use safe behaviour consistently.

Priorities for pedestrian safety

Tips to keep your child safe

Hold hands

- Children need to be actively supervised in and around traffic. Hold hands with your child when crossing the road until they are at least 10 years old.
- If your hands are full, make sure your child holds on to a trolley or pram, your bag, or even your arm or sleeve.

Set a good example

- Children are always watching – they want to be grown up and be just like older children and adults. Make sure you always set a good example for your child around traffic.

Talk with children about traffic and road safety

- As you are walking, talk with your child about why you are stopping, and what you are looking and listening for. Explain to your child where it is safer to cross the road and why.

Guidelines for children of different ages

Up to 5 years of age

At home

Whilst most child pedestrians are injured in traffic, many young children up to the age of 2 years are run over in driveways, mostly by reversing cars driven by family or friends.

- Always supervise your child near cars or traffic.
- Never leave a young child alone to play, especially near parked or moving cars.
- If possible, fence your child's play area off from driveways and the street. If this is not possible, help your child choose a safe place to play away from cars and driveways.
- You need to be able to see a young child constantly when a car is being moved, or to have a second adult hold their hand to ensure there is a clear passage for the car to move.
- If there is only one adult at home, and there is a need to move the car, even for a short distance, place your child securely in the car when the car is being moved.
- Get into the habit of walking right around your car before backing out. Have everyone else using your driveway do the same.

In traffic situations

- Always be with your child. They are too young to cope in the traffic alone.
- Hold your child's hand when you are near traffic.
- Set a good example for them to copy. Begin teaching them to 'STOP, LOOK, LISTEN and THINK' when they are about to cross a road.
- Make sure they get in and out of the car on the footpath side.

From 5 to 9 years

- Supervise your child at all times near traffic, particularly when crossing roads.
- Teach your child how to cross roads safely. Children must first stop at the kerb, then look and listen for traffic, and then decide whether it is safe to cross. ('STOP, LOOK, LISTEN and THINK').
- Make the trip to school together along the safest footpaths, and use safe crossing places as a safe example for your child to follow.
- If you are picking your child up from school, have a safe meeting place, then cross the street with them. Never call your child over from the opposite side of the street.
- Continue to make sure your child gets in and out of the car on the footpath side.
- Explain words like 'fast', 'slow', 'near', and 'far'. Talk about signs and traffic lights and the safe places to cross roads. Point out dangerous places and where not to cross the road (for example, near curves or bends in the road, and where objects might hide children from the view of drivers).
- Make sure your child wears bright clothes when outside playing so that they are easier to see.

Pedestrian Safety Programs Research has found that children respond well to being taught pedestrian safety from a young age. Ask your child's preschool or school about the road and pedestrian safety programs being taught.

For more information, contact:

Kidsafe SA Inc.
Women's and Children's Hospital
72 King William Rd,
North Adelaide SA 5006
Phone: (08) 8161 6318
Email: sa@kidsafe.org.au
Website: www.kidsafesa.com.au

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For more information about the range of road and pedestrian safety programs available go to:

www.roadsafety.sa.edu.au/content.asp?group=Home