

Driveway safety

Information for parents and caregivers



Every year in Australia, eight children younger than five are killed after being run over at low speed.¹

Every week in Queensland alone, three children are run over at low speed. Usually, two of these are boys, and most incidents involve children aged four or less.²

The only recent studies into low-speed runovers have been conducted in Queensland.

The risks

- Young children are naturally curious. They can move quickly and can run behind a car without warning.
- Small children can be impossible to see from inside a car, especially if they are directly behind it.
- Most drivers are aware of their car's 'blind spots', but many popular cars have a 'blind space' behind them of more than 15 metres.
- Children move quickly. They can gain access to the driveway easily and dart out unseen into the path of a moving vehicle.
- Low-speed runovers most often occur in daylight. Most fatalities occur from 6am–9am, and 3pm–5pm.²
- Low-speed vehicle runovers occur on any day of the week at any time of year. For children under four, most incidents occur from September to December.²

The facts: What can happen!

- Many low-speed runovers happen in a driveway, mostly at the child's own home.^{2,3}
- Mostly the vehicle involved is driven by a parent or someone who knows the child.^{1,2,3}
- Many incidents occur while the vehicle is reversing, but children can also be run over while the vehicle is moving forwards.^{1,2,3}
- Boys are more often involved than girls.^{2,3,4}
- The consequences of being run over can be worse for younger children because, compared to older children, their heads are large relative to their bodies.^{2,4} Common injuries from low-speed runovers are head injuries, fractured legs, internal injuries, cuts, scrapes, and bruises.^{2,3,4} Driveway runovers can be fatal, especially in the 12–24-month age group.²
- Any vehicle type can be involved in a low-speed runover that causes serious injury to a child, but 4WDs and utilities are most commonly associated with deaths because they are heavier vehicles.
- Driveways longer than 12 metres, shared driveways, curved driveways or those placed along a side boundary of the property, increase the risk.⁵

Keep your driveway Kidsafe!

Be aware of your blind spots when driving!

Don't go if you don't know!

Prevention

A multi-layered approach to reducing injury:

Supervise

When moving vehicles, know where your kids are at all times. Physically hold them close to you or put them in the car with you. Teach kids to wave bye-bye from a safe place – never the driveway. Never leave children unattended in cars.

Separate

Use fences and self-closing gates to keep garages and driveways separate from play areas. Always keep car doors locked. Prevent toddlers gaining access to garages by installing doors that open inward to the house, self-close and have highset handles. Treat the driveway like a road – never a play area.

See

Walk around your car and keep children in mind when using your reversing mirrors, sensors or cameras. Cameras are designed to prevent damage to cars, not children – and sometimes a child may not be visible until it's too late. Understand how little you can see behind your car – vehicle size is not always a good indicator. Some family sedans have a blind spot of more than 15 metres, and it is possible to fit more than 60 pre-schoolers behind a vehicle and not see them from the driver's seat!

Sources

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2. Griffin B, Wallis B, Watt K, Nixon J, Cass D, Kimble R. (2011) Low Speed Vehicle Run-Over Incidents in Queensland: – 11 Years of Data (Jan 1999-Dec 2009) – Research Findings and Recommendations. QIPC Symposium – Injury Prevention in Queensland: Results and Recommendations. 7-8 June 2011, Brisbane.
3. Hockey R, Miles E, Barker R. Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit Bulletin no.76. Low Speed Run-overs of Young Children in Qld, 2003.
4. Queensland Trauma Review, Driveway Run Overs. February 2010. Queensland Trauma Registry. Centre of National Research on Rehabilitation and Disability Medicine. University of Queensland.
5. Shepherd M, Austin P, Chambers J (2010). Driveway runover, the influence of the built environment: A case control study. Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health 46(12): 760-767.

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