



Prevent Pedestrian Crashes

Parents and Caregivers of Elementary School Children

Elementary school children are very active and impulsive. Although they are learning and growing, school-age children 10 and younger still need guidance and supervision when playing and walking near traffic.

Did you know?

- Fatalities among young pedestrians most often occur during the after school hours.
- The majority of the young pedestrian fatalities are boys.

Here are some common myths that children may believe about being a pedestrian. Make sure your child knows the facts.

Myth: A green light means that it is safe to cross.

Fact: A green light means that you should stop and search for cars. Before you step off the curb, look LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT for traffic, and if it is safe to do so, cross and keep looking left and right as you do so. Be alert for vehicles making a right turn on red.

Myth: You are safe in a crosswalk.

Fact: You may cross at a crosswalk but before you do: stop at the curb and look LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT for cars. When it is clear, cross and keep looking left and right for cars.

Myth: If you see the driver, the driver sees you.

Fact: The driver may not see you. Make certain the driver stops before you cross the street.

Myth: The driver will stop if you are in a crosswalk or at a green light.

Fact: The driver may not see you. The driver may run a traffic light illegally. The driver may turn without looking for pedestrians.

Myth: Wearing white at night makes you visible to drivers.

Fact: White does not make you more visible at night. You must carry a flashlight and/or wear retroreflective clothing to be more visible to drivers. Always walk facing traffic.

When crossing a street your child should always

- Cross at the corner or at an intersection.
- Stop at the edge of parked cars, the curb, or other vehicles.
- Look LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT for moving cars.
- Cross when clear, and keep looking left and right.
- Walk, don't run or dart, into the street.
- Look for signs that a car is about to move (*rear lights, exhaust smoke, sound of motor, wheels turning*).
- Walk alertly; use your eyes and your ears to increase your safety.



Illinois Department
of Transportation
Division of Traffic Safety



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Parents and Caregivers of Preschool Children

As you probably know, preschool children move quickly and are often unaware of danger. Each year, many children are injured or killed when they suddenly dart into the paths of cars. Did you know that: (1) most preschoolers are injured near their homes, on their own streets or even in their own driveways, and (2) most traffic crashes involving preschoolers occur in fair and warm weather.

This Is How You Can Prevent These Tragedies

Supervise preschoolers at all times.

Preschoolers should NOT be allowed to cross the street alone. Teach them who can help them cross the street safely (generally adults or siblings over the age of 12). Always hold the hand of a preschooler when crossing the street. Avoid making your driveway a “playground.” If you do allow children in this area, make sure that it’s only when there are no vehicles present.

To further protect children who may be outside playing, separate the driveway from the roadway with a physical barrier to prevent any cars from entering. Ensure your children are properly supervised at all times, especially wherever motor vehicles are present. Teach children not to play in, around, or under vehicles – ever.

Teach by explaining

Explain to your child the safe way you cross a street. Say, “When I cross a street, I always stop at the curb. I look and listen for cars. I look left for any traffic coming, and then I look right for traffic coming that way. Then I look left again for any traffic coming. When it is clear, I cross the street, and keep looking left and right and listening for cars coming.” You can also explain how you look and listen for vehicles where they may be backing up (out of a driveway, parking lot, etc). Say: “Sometimes I can hear trucks backing up because they make a loud beeping sound to warn me. I also can look for a car or truck moving backward, and I can look and see white lights in the back of the car that tell me the driver is getting ready or is going backwards.” Use life as a teaching opportunity; quietly point out to your child when you notice others using safe pedestrian and unsafe pedestrian behavior. This reinforces your message and is also helpful for visual learners.

Teach by example – be a role model

Your child watches and notices your actions as an adult. They think if you do the behavior it must be correct. Always do the right thing and show safe behavior.

When walking, always:

- Walk on the sidewalk, if one is available.
- Walk facing traffic if no sidewalk is available.

When crossing the street, always:

- Cross at a corner or crosswalk with the walk signal.
- Stop at the curb.
- Exaggerate looking LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT for traffic in all directions before and while crossing the street. Explain you are looking for either no traffic or that traffic has stopped for you to cross safely.
- Hold your child’s hand when crossing the street.
- Cross when it is clear.
- Keep looking for cars as you cross.

Encourage your child.

As you both safely cross the street together, praise the child for copying your safe actions or words. Practice what you teach at ALL times.

