

Pedestrian safety for your child



The Royal Children's Hospital Safety Centre, Melbourne 2008

Young children need to learn how to use the road system safely.

As adults, we take for granted how well we are able to interpret the environment around us, but children have to be taught the skills they will need to be safe, independent road users.

Children observe their environment from a very different perspective, not only are they seeing everything from a lower viewpoint they also have not yet developed necessary abilities such as judging speed and distance, making lifesaving decisions and understanding danger, which is a necessity for their road safety. Young children are vulnerable in traffic and should always be accompanied by an adult

Children learn at a very young age through observation. Before they can speak they are learning about the world around them by watching their parents and caregivers. As soon as a child is introduced to a new environment they are taking in everything they see. When you introduce your child to the environment of cars and roads they are looking to you for guidance, so lead by example.

Babies 6 to 12 months

Children learn most during their first year of life. Babies learn best by copying others and through repetition. By repeating the following tasks every time you are around cars and traffic you are teaching your child at a very young age that the road is very different to the home environment they are used to.

In the car

- **Always take your child out of the car on the kerb side:** Your child will get used to only using the door on the kerb side to exit the car, this will carry on to primary school years when they become more independent.
- **Taking your child out of the car should be the last thing you do and putting them in is the first:** It is very difficult at times to fumble with shopping and a child. Always put your child in the car first so you can carry on with everything else knowing that your child is restrained. When getting out of the car, take your child out of the car last so they are always by your side.

In the street

- **Always choose safe places to cross with a clear view of traffic.** By choosing safe and clear places to cross e.g. pedestrian crossings or traffic lights, your child will start to understand where they should cross the road.
- **Stop at the kerb before crossing and explain to your child how and where you are checking for traffic.**

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Toddlers~12 months to 2 years

Once children are mobile they are at greater risk of serious injury in the driveway, car parks and on the roads. Supervise your child at all times and help them understand that the road is a very dangerous place and that they cannot go without a parent or carer.

In the street

- **Always** hold your toddler's hand at all times. If they are unwilling, use a pusher
- Look for dangers. Stop at driveways and tell your child you are checking for cars
- Talk to your toddler about what to do when crossing streets or driveways
- Point out any road signs, traffic signals and road markings – tell your child what they mean
- Involve your child, ask them what they can see and if they think it is safe.

In the driveway

In Australia one child every week is run over in the driveway of their own home.

- Separate the driveway and the garage from where children play
- Always supervise your children when a vehicle is being moved on your property
- If you are the only parent/carer at home and you need to move a car, put your children securely in the car with you so they are safe at all times
- Make access to the driveway from the house or yard difficult for children. Put in a fence, security door or gate
- Do not at any time allow your children to play in the driveway, this is not a play area
- Remember that using mirrors when reversing still leaves limited visibility of the area behind the car
- Know where all children are before reversing out of your driveway. Walk around the back of your car before reversing; proceed slowly and cautiously
- Make sure none of the child's toys are ever near the driveway or front pathways
- Fit special mirrors to your car to make it easier to see when reversing



Children~2 to 3 years

At this age your child is learning and using many new words. Explain to your child the meaning of words such as stop, go, look and dangerous. The basics, such as holding your child's hand at all times, are still very important. Now that they are a little older, you can involve them in decision making when it comes to crossing the road.

In the street

- **Hold hands with your child** – boys are three times more likely than girls to be involved in pedestrian injuries, so it is worth persevering.
- **When crossing a road stop at the kerb and show them where the traffic is coming from:** Help your child get used to looking both ways before letting you know it might be safe to cross.
- **Talk about vehicles travelling towards you and away from you and vehicles that are travelling fast and slow:** Explain why you decide it is safe to cross
- **Involve your child in the decision making:** By encouraging your child to share your thoughts on what to do in different circumstances your child can become more confident in their ability to follow the road rules.

In car parks

- **Do not allow your child to get out of the car until you are at their door waiting:** If you have a baby in the car, have your child wait in the car until you have taken the baby out and you are ready.
- **Continue to make sure your child is exiting the car on the kerb side.**

Child road safety

Constant supervision is the best way to know where your child is so you can help keep them safe. Children most at risk on the roads are those aged five to nine, often because they are given more opportunities to cross roads on their own. By putting habits in place that teach your child about road safety from a very young age you are giving your child the best chance you can to keep them safe on the roads. Remember that the best road safety training is practical experience.

For further information contact:

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VicRoads Road Safety Information Service
Telephone: 1300 360 745
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For further information
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Telephone 9345 5085
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