

On the Streets: Child Safety on Pedestrian Sidewalks

Written by Administrator

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Parents must regularly remind their children that sidewalks are primarily intended for pedestrian traffic so that they'll be extra careful when using them to enjoy their skateboards, rollerblades or bicycles. However, even when children just walk down neighborhood sidewalks en route to their schools, homes or other destinations, parents must realize that if they suffer any injuries, they're likely to be severe.

According to an article posted on Children's Medical Center Web site, the injuries children often sustain on sidewalks are frequently serious since they do not have the cognitive or developmental abilities to understand all of the local traffic rules or environmental risks to their safety. In fact, the pedestrian injuries suffered by children between the ages of five and fourteen are the second leading cause of death (regarding unintentional injuries) incurred by that age group.

Our firm suggests that you go over the following tips with your children to increase their safety whenever must they travel down your city's streets and sidewalks.

Street and Sidewalk Safety Tips for Children

- **Time of day.** Try to limit the time your children will be out on city sidewalks around dusk (or near sunrise) since it's extra difficult for drivers to see anyone at those times of day. Whenever possible, give your children rides to night events so they'll rarely, if ever, need to walk or ride down sidewalks alone in the dark;

- **Neighborhoods with Higher Speed Limits.** Try to avoid letting your children walk or ride down sidewalks in areas where drivers will be passing by at higher speeds. Should the unexpected happen, such drivers may not have enough time to hit their brakes and avoid causing accidents that could involve your children;
- **Demonstrate Proper Pedestrian Behavior for Your Child.** Next time you're walking down a sidewalk with your children, show them how to always take a quick look around before actually walking across any driveway or alleyway. Furthermore, show them how to stop at sidewalk corners and carefully look both ways before ever crossing when there's not a crossing light. Also, tell them that whenever sidewalks are crowded, they should always just walk their bikes so they'll be less likely to cause any accidents;
- **Explain What to Do if a Street Has No Sidewalks.** Should a street not have any sidewalks, either tell your child to make a short detour and look for a nearby street that does have them (assuming you've already checked out the safety of the general area), or tell them that they should walk as far to the left as possible, *always facing oncoming traffic*;
- **Crossing Streets Alone.** It's always unwise to let any child under the age of ten try to cross a street alone;
- **Making Eye Contact with Drivers.** Tell your children that it's always a good idea to make clear eye contact with drivers, once sidewalk lights have changed in your children's favor, to be sure they clearly see them before crossing any street;
- **What to Do If a Toy Rolls Into the Street.** Always forbid your children from ever running out into any street to retrieve a toy or other item that has rolled out there. Tell them to let you know so that you can try and personally retrieve it;
- **Playing Right Behind a Car or Truck Parked in a Driveway.** Be sure to tell your children that it's just too dangerous to stop and play, even for just a few minutes, behind a vehicle parked in a driveway. If the driver jumps in quickly, starts to back out and doesn't seem them, they could be killed instantly;
- **Wearing Reflective Clothing When It's Dark Outside.** While it's best for kids to come indoors once it gets dark, be sure they wear bright, reflective clothing if they must be outside during early evening hours;
- **Never Allow Children to Play in the Streets.** Even if you live in a very quiet neighborhood, no child should ever be allowed to play in the streets. It's just too easy for them to suffer serious injuries while doing so and it makes it extra hard for watchful parents and neighbors to keep an eye on them;

- **Always Sit Outside Near Your Children When They're Playing.** One adult must always be ready to render aid to an injured child or to jump to their defense should someone drive up to a sidewalk and try to snatch a child. When you give a child permission to walk to a friend's house, always have them call you to let you know they arrived safely;
- **Post a List of These and Other Safety Rules in Your Kitchen.** If you'll periodically go over these rules with your children, they'll be far more likely to stay safe while playing outdoors or simply walking to a friend's house with your permission.

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