
Road and traffic safety for children

Summary

- Young children need adult help in the road environment and regular opportunities to develop and practice skills together with adults.
 - Children learn road safety habits by watching and copying others, so set a good example.
 - Talk with your child about roads, signs, traffic, and how and where we cross the road safely.
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In their early years, children need lots of assistance from adults to manage the considerable risks associated with road use. They need particular help in detecting the presence of traffic and judging the speed and distance of oncoming traffic.

As they grow and develop, and with the help of adults, children become increasingly aware of how they can manage their own safety, and become safer road users.

Helping children to be safe around traffic

Road safety skills are best learnt in the real traffic environment. Children learn by experience, and adult interaction helps them to learn. You can help by talking with your child as you walk. Ask questions about roads, signs, traffic, and how and where you can cross the road safely.

Road safety for children under five

Always carefully supervise children in traffic situations. It is important to:

- Talk with your child about the traffic environment.
- Hold your child's hand when you are near cars. Talk with your child about why it is important to hold hands.
- Explain what you are doing when you cross the road together. Involve your child in deciding when it is safe to cross the road – of course you still make the decision, but you are teaching your child to think in the traffic environment.
- Always be a good role model for your child by wearing your own seatbelt, obeying road rules, driving courteously and crossing roads safely.
- Make eye contact with road users, especially at intersections.
- Involve your child in choosing safe places to play.
- Separate play areas from driveways.
- Ask if your child's early childhood service includes road safety education in the program.

Road safety for children between five and nine

Your child still needs adult supervision and assistance in the traffic environment. It is important to:

- Talk together about signs and traffic lights. Identify and discuss places where it is safe to cross the road.
- Teach your child how to cross roads using the 'stop, look, listen and think' process – stop at the kerb, look and listen for traffic and then decide whether it is safe to cross. Take the trip to school together along the safest footpaths and use safe crossing places, such as pedestrian crossings and on straight sections of road.
- Supervise your child on the way to and from school.
- Always be a good role model for your child by wearing your own seatbelt, obeying road rules, driving courteously and crossing roads safely.
- Ask at your child's school what road safety programs are being taught.

Road safety for children between 10 and 13

Children between 10 and 13 can cope more safely in traffic on their own. This will depend, however, on how much practice the child has had in the 'real traffic environment'. It is important to:

- Check that your child always 'stops, looks, listens and thinks' when crossing the road. Ask them to explain to you what they are doing and why they are doing it.
- Talk with your child about road laws. Go for regular rides and walks together.
- Plan with your child safe routes to school and to places your child often visits.
- Make sure your child wears bright colours that can be easily seen by road users.

Where to get help

- **Community Information (formerly Safety Centre)**, The Royal Children's Hospital Tel. (03) 9345 5085
- **VicRoads**, Tel. 13 11 71

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