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PARENT PLUS

INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

Teach children about pedestrian safety

Children move quickly and impulsively and are mentally unprepared to navigate traffic on their own. These risks make it important to improve walking safety for youngsters.

The majority of parents overestimate their child's ability to handle traffic and do not adequately teach children about road safety, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

Approximately 55,000 children are injured every year as pedestrians, 5,000 of whom are hospitalized. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that 876 youths younger than 19 years old died from a pedestrian-related accident in 2005. Traffic accidents in which children are killed occur most often between 3 and 7 p.m., according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Consider the following to keep children safe from traffic- and pedestrian-related accidents:

- The AAP recommends that children younger than 10 years old be supervised when walking.
- Parents should be reminded of the large blind spot behind the car to prevent injuries from vehicle back-overs.
- In low-light conditions, use reflective clothing and other visibility aids.
- Design safe routes for children to walk to school.
- If possible, walk with your child to school or organize a "walking school bus" and take turns with other families to walk a group of children to school.
- Create play areas in the community and at home that keep children away from traffic as much as possible.

— *David Ma*

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