Biking to School— Tips for Parents

- Children younger than age 8 need close supervision and should be accompanied by an adult, even when riding on quiet neighborhood streets.
- Until children are about 9 years old, they should not rely solely on hand brakes to stop their bike. They have not developed the hand and wrist strength to stop their bike quickly and safely. Bikes for smaller children should have a coaster (foot) brake or both.
- When your child is ready to bike, check to see that the bike is the right size. They should be able to sit on the seat and balance the bike with toe tips resting on the ground without leaning to either side.

Teach your children basic bike safety rules

- Always wear a properly adjusted bicycle helmet.
- Obey all traffic signs, just like car drivers.
- Use hand signals when planning to turn or stop.
- When in the street, ride in the same direction as the traffic. Ride on the right hand side of the road.
- Stop and look all ways before entering traffic from a driveway, alley or sidewalk.
- Add reflective materials to your bike, backpack and clothing. You'll be more visible in bad weather and when it's dark.

Taking the School Bus— Tips for Parents

- Avoid driving to the bus stop, as this adds to the confusion and increases congestion.
- Always wait for your child on the same side of the street as the school bus loading/unloading zone.
- Stress the need to cooperate with the bus driver and the school safety patrol or crossing guard.

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Getting Children to School Safely

What every parent should know>>

Parents are the Key

Whether children walk, take the bus, bike or ride in a car, parents play a key role in getting them to school safely.

Children Walking to School or the Bus Stop—Are They Safe?

Parents should consider these factors when selecting a walking route to school:

- **The child's age—**Children under the age of 9 or 10 usually do not have the skills to walk alone in areas of traffic. Parents should consider the readiness of each individual child, regardless of age.
- **Traffic—**The volume of traffic and speed may not allow for a safe route to school.
- **Crime—**High-crime areas create an unsafe environment and potentially dangerous situations.
- **Street signs and traffic signals—**Appropriate traffic signs and signals can help warn drivers of the presence of children and help kids cross the street.
- **Time of day and weather—**When it is dark or the weather is bad, driver's visibility is reduced, as is their ability to stop quickly.
- **Crossing guards—**Adult crossing guards and AAA School Safety Patrollers can help children cross the road safely.
- **Distance to school—**The longer the walk, the more traffic hazards children will encounter.

What Parents Can Do to Make Their Children's Walk Safer

Walk with children many times to familiarize them with the route. This creates an opportunity to point out challenges and how to deal with them. Select a route with the fewest streets to cross. Only cross at corners or in crosswalks.

Have children walk in a group. As a group, they are more visible than they would be walking alone. With more eyes and ears, they may negotiate traffic situations more safely. Having an adult walk with the group can make the trip even safer.

Talk with children about traffic safety and teach them when and where it is safest to cross streets.

Children should learn to **cross only on the proper signal, watch for cars** turning on red, and **look for cross traffic** before entering the roadway.

Remind children to take their time, and to stop and look all ways, even where there is a well marked crosswalk or traffic signal. Teach children to make eye contact with a driver before they cross in front of a car.

Teach children to watch for cars backing out of driveways and parking spots. Emphasize the importance of visually scanning these dangerous areas.

Be a role model for children by obeying laws and demonstrating good pedestrian safety habits.

Practical Solutions

Every day, caring parents unknowingly create traffic hazards by contributing to school congestion as they drop off their children. Congestion in the school zone makes it difficult for parents and children to see one another. Parents can take the following measures to reduce school zone traffic hazards:

- Use the existing drop-off/pick-up system provided by your school.
- If a drop-off/pick-up system is not in place or traffic flows poorly, work with your school officials to create or improve the system.
- Reduce school zone congestion by car pooling with others.
- Teach and encourage children to use crosswalks. Children under age 10 should not cross alone.
- Always remember to use seat belts and appropriate child safety seats or booster seats.