

Back to School Safety Tips

Starting the first day of school can be exciting for the whole family. The following safety tips, from the American Academy of Pediatrics, are designed to keep you and your family safe this school year.

TRAVELING TO AND FROM SCHOOL

Parents should make sure to review the basic rules with their children:

School Bus

- If your child's school bus has lap/shoulder seat belts, make sure your child uses one at all times when in the bus. If your child's school bus does not have lap/shoulder belts, encourage the school to buy or lease buses with lap/shoulder belts.
- Wait for the bus to stop before approaching it from the curb.
- Do not move around on the bus.
- Check to see that no other traffic is coming before crossing.
- Make sure to always remain in clear view of the bus driver.



Car

- All passengers should wear a seat belt and/or an age- and size-appropriate car safety seat or booster seat.
- Your child should ride in a car safety seat with a harness as long as possible and then ride in a belt-positioning booster seat. Your child is ready for a booster seat when she has reached the top weight or height allowed for her seat, her shoulders are above the top harness slots, or her ears have reached the top of the seat.
- Your child should ride in a belt-positioning booster seat until the vehicle's seat belt fits properly (usually when the child reaches about 4' 9" in height and is between 8 to 12 years of age). This means the shoulder belt lies across the middle of the chest and shoulder, not the neck or throat; the lap belt is low and snug across the thighs, not the stomach; and the child is tall enough to sit against the vehicle seat back with her legs bent at the knees and feet hanging down.
- All children under 13 years of age should ride in the rear seat of vehicles. If you must drive more children than can fit in the rear seat (when carpooling, for example), move the front-seat passenger's seat as far back as possible and have the child ride in a booster seat if the seat belts do not fit properly without it.
- Remember that many crashes occur while novice teen drivers are going to and from school. You should limit the number of teen passengers to prevent driver distraction; this is even required by law in many states. Do not allow your teen to drive while eating, drinking, or talking on a cell phone.



Bike

- Always wear a bicycle helmet, no matter how short or long the ride.
- Ride on the right, in the same direction as auto traffic.
- Use appropriate hand signals.
- Respect traffic lights and stop signs.
- Wear bright color clothing to increase visibility.
- Know the "rules of the road."

Walking to School

- Make sure your child's walk to a school is a safe route with well-trained adult crossing guards at every intersection.
- Be realistic about your child's pedestrian skills. Because small children are impulsive and less cautious around traffic, carefully consider whether or not your child is ready to walk to school without adult supervision.
- Bright colored clothing will make your child more visible to drivers.

