

Kids Safety



Pedestrian Safety

Getting out and about does a body good, especially when it's a kid-sized body.

Taking walks, be it for fun or to get to and from school, is great exercise. However, unintentional pedestrian injuries are the fifth leading cause of injury-related death in the United States for children ages 5-19, according to SafeKids.org. Here's how to teach your kids basic pedestrian safety to keep them safe while they're getting their steps in.

LOOK BOTH WAYS

From an early age, teach kids to look left, right and then left again before crossing the street. Remind them to keep looking until they're safely across. If they can, they should make eye contact with drivers before crossing the street in front of stopped cars. Teach them that the safest place to cross the street is at the street corner, using traffic signals and crosswalks. If there isn't a crosswalk, walk facing traffic as far to the left as possible.

Children under the age of 10 should always cross the street with an adult. SafeKids.org says that while every child is different developmentally, generally, children are unable to judge the speed and distance of oncoming cars until they're 10.

STAYING VISIBLE

When you're out walking,



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make sure that you're visible to drivers. This means wearing brightly colored or reflective clothing at night. Teach children not to run out into the street or cross the street from between parked cars. Drivers have a hard time seeing even grown-ups between

parked cars. Shorter children can be almost impossible to see. Also teach them to keep an eye out for turning or reversing cars. Those drivers may have limited vision.

FIGHT DISTRACTION

There's such a thing as dis-

tracted walking, too. Teach kids to put phones, headphones and devices down when crossing the street, just like you should when you're driving. Model good behavior by putting cell phones and other distractions down while you're driving. As a driver, be

on the lookout for pedestrians, especially in residential neighborhoods and school zones. Show your children how you, as a driver, give pedestrians the right of way and look both ways when making a turn to spot bikers, walkers or runners.

Poison Control Centers

In 2019, the 55 Poison Control Centers around the United States provided guidance for more than 2.1 million poison exposures. That's one poison exposure call every 15 seconds.

Young children make up the majority of those calls, Poison Control says, with peak poisoning frequency occurring in 1- and 2-year-olds.

MOST COMMON POISON INCIDENTS

The most common poison exposures in children come from cosmetics and personal care products, the center says, followed by cleaning substances and analgesics. Most of these exposures are unintentional, meaning a child accidentally ingested a product not intended for human consumption.

While most calls involve substances that are nontoxic or minimally toxic, pain medications are the single most frequent cause of pediatric fatalities reported to Poison Control, the centers say. Intentional exposures were more deadly. Those are cases where someone deliberately ingests a product to cause harm.

STORING MEDICINES SAFELY

To keep your kids safe from



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ingesting drugs, intentional or otherwise, SafeKids.org says you should always store your medications up and out of sight and reach. This can be a high cabinet or drawer the kids can't easily get to. Store medications in child-proof packaging. You can also store the Poison Control Centers' number — (800) 222-1222 — in your phone and have it

posted in your home.

If you have trouble remembering your medication if you can't see it, try setting alarms on your watch or cell phone, or combine taking your medicines with another daily habit such as brushing your teeth. You can also use a medication schedule card or case to keep your medications on track and safely stored.

For dosing children, carefully check dosages before administering them.

"Dosing errors (when a parent or other caregiver gives too much or too little medicine) are the type of medication error that most often brings children into the Emergency Department," Dr. Shonna Yin, NYU School of Medicine, told the Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention.

Use the dosage device that comes with your child's medication to give it to them, not household spoons, to make sure they get the right amount.

If you have any questions, ask your doctor or pharmacist before you administer the medications.

Animal Safety

Most kids love animals, and having a pet or other creature around can be a wonderful addition to a child's life.

It's important, however, to make that relationship a healthy and safe one for both parties. Here are some tips relating to both indoor and outdoor animals from Nemours KidsHealth.

TREAT THEM KINDLY

Animals wild and domestic need to be treated with kindness. Teach your kids that kindness, however, can mean different things in different situations and with different animals. A wild squirrel, for example, might not like gentle pets as much as your family dog.

WILD ANIMALS

The rule for all wild animals is not to go near it, even if the animal is super cute or appears to be in distress. Wild animals aren't used to people and if they're stressed or sick, they may bite or attack if you come near them. They could also carry diseases that can make people very ill. You should never try to feed a wild animal. Animals have special diets and being given human food could hurt them. It also teaches them that humans are a source of food, which could prove dangerous later.

PETS

Hollywood aside, pets can't speak up and tell you if they're upset or scared. To avoid scratches and bites, follow these tips from Nemours KidsHealth:

- Never bother a pet while it's eating or tease it with food

and water.

- Don't pull a pet's tail or ears.
- Never bother a pet while it's sleeping.
- Don't take a toy or bone away from a pet and hold it out of its reach.
- Never get near a pet with

its babies. Animal mothers are very protective.

- Slowly lift a small pet, such as a rabbit, hamster, guinea pig or gerbil. Hold the animal securely underneath its belly.
- Never pick up or hold a rabbit by its ears.
- Wash your hands after han-

dling reptiles; they can carry bacteria such as salmonella.

- Don't stick your bare hand into a fish tank. Some can sting if they get upset.
- If a pet looks sick or injured, keep away. Even the nicest pets, can get upset when they don't feel well.





Biking Safety

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Biking is a great way to get fresh air and exercise and give kids a sense of freedom, within reason.

It's also great for the environment. It can, however, be dangerous. Safe Kids Worldwide says that less than half of children 14 and under usually wear a bike helmet even though a properly fitted helmet can reduce the risk of head injuries by at least 45%.

WEAR YOUR HELMET

Always wear a helmet. In some states and cities, it's even the law. Buy the helmet that fits your head

now and make sure it's one that is comfortable and attractive. Otherwise, you or your kids won't wear it as frequently as you should. Finally, pick a helmet that meets the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission standards. Look for the certification label inside the helmet.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says that, just like heads, helmets come in different sizes. The first step is to measure your head to find your size, then try on several helmets until one feels right.

Your helmet should sit level on your head and low on your forehead, one or two finger widths above your eyebrow. The side straps should form a V under and around your ears. If you can, lock the slider to

keep them in that position. Center the left buckle under your chin and buckle the chin strap snugly. No more than two fingers should fit under the strap.

To check the fit, open your mouth wide. The helmet should pull down on your head. If it doesn't tighten the chin strap more. If it rocks back more than two fingers above your eyebrows, unbuckle the helmet and shorten the strap. The helmet should also not rock forward into your eyes.

WHEN TO REPLACE A HELMET

Replace your helmet any time it takes a hit in a fall. Not all damage is visible and can compromise your helmet the next time you crash. You should also replace your helmet or your child's helmet frequently as

they grow. Never buy a helmet that you can "grow into."

MORE BIKE SAFETY TIPS

Here are more bike safety tips from Safe Kids Worldwide:

- Ride on the sidewalk when you can, or ride in the same direction as traffic as far to the right as possible.
- Use hand signals for turns and follow the rules of the road. Ride in a straight line and don't swerve between cars.
- Wear bright colors and use lights, especially when riding at night. Put reflectors on your bike and clothing so you can be seen.
- Kids, ride with adults for as long as you can to keep you safe, especially in unfamiliar or high-traffic areas.

Fighting Peer Pressure

No one said that getting older made life any easier, and that's definitely true of middle and high school.

One of the things that can be most difficult for older kids is dealing with peer pressure. It's human nature to listen to the people around you that are like you, and it's possible for peer pressure to be a good thing. For example, your friends can encourage you to study and work hard or to meet an athletic goal.

Peer pressure can also be negative, however. Your friends can try to get you to skip school or try substances that aren't safe for you, such as drugs or alcohol. Let's learn some more about peer pressure and how to fight it when it's bad.

WHY GIVE IN?

There are lots of reasons why people give into peer pressure, even if they know the situation is going to have a bad outcome. They could want to be liked, to fit in or they might be more afraid of being made fun of than the consequences of making poor choices. The idea that everyone's doing it can push some kids to do things they don't want to do.

WALKING AWAY FROM PEER PRESSURE

It's important that, when you're facing peer pressure,



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you keep your wits about you and pay attention to your own feelings and beliefs, Nemours KidsHealth says. Work on your self confidence all day, every day, not just when you're facing peer pressure. That can help you take a stand for what's right when it's time.

MAKE GREAT FRIENDS

You should also choose your friends wisely. Hanging out with people with your same values and who don't make poor choice means you won't be as tempted to do those things yourself. If you have a friend who's struggling with

peer pressure, step in and lend a hand. They will return the favor one day.

TALKING TO ADULTS

Remember that adults deal with peer pressure, too. Don't feel bad for making mistakes. As soon as you can, turn to a

parent, teacher or other trusted adult to deal with the situation. The longer you let bad choices linger, the worse the consequences can be. Don't continue making bad choices by lying or otherwise trying to cover up what you did in the first place.

Eating Healthy for Kids

Eating healthy for kids isn't so different as eating healthy for adults, the Mayo Clinic says.

Everyone needs the same kind of nutrition — the appropriate amount of protein, fat, vitamins and minerals — but children need different amounts that change as they grow.

CALORIE GUIDELINES

- Growing kids need different calorie intakes than adults, especially those with sedentary jobs. For ages 2-4, girls should get 1,000 to 1,400 calories per day, depending on growth and activity level, the Mayo Clinic says. Boys should get 1,000-1,600 calories per day.

- From ages 5 to 8, girls should get 1,200 to 1,800 calories per day and boys should get 1,200 to 2,000 calories per day.

- Girls who are 9-13 should get 1,400 to 2,200 calories per day, while boys should get 1,600 to 2,600 calories per day.

- Between 14 and 18, girls should get 1,800 to 2,400 calories per day, depending on growth and activity, and boys should get 2,000-3,200 calories per day.

FOODS TO CHOOSE

Balanced nutrition keeps children active and growing. You should limit added sugar from your children's diets.



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This means taking out sugary drinks such as soda, sports drinks and energy drinks, the Mayo Clinic says. Also target saturated fats and trans fats, and watch how much sodium children get. Limit access to salty snacks, such as chips.

Children should get protein, fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lots of good dairy products. Here are some

examples to look for under each category:

- **Protein:** Seafood, lean meat and poultry, eggs, beans, peas, soy products if your child isn't allergic, unsalted nuts and seeds. Limit red meats.

- **Fruits:** Look for fresh, canned, frozen and dried fruits, but try to avoid fruit juices. Canned fruit should be

light or packed in its own juice, and watch the amounts of dried fruits in your child's diet. Remember that a quarter cup of dried fruit counts as a cup of fresh fruit. Too much dried fruit can mean extra calories.

- **Vegetables:** Fresh, canned, frozen or dried veggies are all OK. Aim for a variety in all the colors of the rainbow and look

for canned or frozen vegetables that are low in sodium.

- **Whole grains:** Look for whole wheat bread, oatmeal, popcorn, quinoa and brown rice. Limit refined grains like those in white bread, pasta and white rice.

- **Dairy:** Pick options that are fat-free or low fat. Milk, yogurt, cheese and soy beverages are all great choices.

Online Safety

Kids these days are online more than ever, especially with pandemic-driven options like virtual meetings and school.

It's just as important to talk about making good choices in their online lives as it is about making good choices in real life, the Federal Trade Commission says.

TEACHING COMPUTER SECURITY

If your kids are on a computer at all, no matter how closely they're supervised, it's time to talk to them about computer security. Kids should, the FTC says, know about:

- Protecting personal information such as Social Security numbers, account numbers, user names and passwords.
- Watching out for free stuff that can hide malware. Tell your kids not to download anything unless they trust the source and have scanned it with security software.

- Choose strong passwords. That means they shouldn't include any personal information, common words or adjacent keys on the keyboard. Don't share passwords with anyone, even with their friends.

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Teens and tweens especially are latching on to social networking. They can, believe it or not, be navigated safely and without sharing too much



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information. Talk to your children about how to act online — that it's not that different from real life and that, like in real life, one poor choice can last forever.

Kids of all ages should never catfish, or impersonate someone else. It's wrong to create sites, pages or posts that seem

like they're from someone else, no matter how innocent it seems at the time. That kind of joke is never funny.

TEXTING AND SEXTING

There are times when texting seems like the primary mode of communication for some kids. Teach them that, just like

in real life, they should respect others in text threads and that sometimes, just like in real life conversations, misunderstandings can happen. The FTC says that kids should:

- Ignore texts from people they don't know.
- Know how to block numbers from their cell phone.

- Not post their cell phone number online.

- Never provide financial information in text.

Sexting is forwarding sexually explicit photos, videos or messages. Kids shouldn't do it, full stop. It risks their reputation and friendships, and could even lead to criminal charges.