



10 Tips for walking or biking safely to School this fall September 2011

In a few short weeks children will be heading back to school. With more children walking and biking to school during morning commute periods drivers and children need to be extra careful. Pedestrian injury remains the second leading cause of unintentional injury in children 5-14. To help kids and area drivers get off on the right foot this school year Coulee Region Childhood Obesity Coalition members want to share these safety tips.

Kids...

- #1. Walk with a buddy.** If your child is between the ages of 5-10 they are just learning to be independent. While they enjoy walking and riding their bike or scooter they don't yet have the judgment to cope with traffic by themselves. Walk to school with your child or walk with one of the 13 walking school buses that are available as part of the safe routes to school project.
- #2. Stop & Look before Crossing.** Teach your kids to stop at every curb and look before they cross. Look left, right and then left again before stepping or moving off the curb and into the street. Strongly urge them to do this when they are walking and biking.
- #3 Choose safe walking routes.** Map out your child's walking/biking route together. Take advantage of walking school buses when possible. Choose routes with sidewalks and the fewest streets to cross. Before school starts, walk or bike the route together so you and your child are comfortable.
- #4. Practice safe crossing habits.** Teach your child to cross at an intersection (rather than in the middle of the block between cars), with traffic lights and to walk, not run across the street. If they are walking in areas without sidewalks, teach them to walk facing traffic.
- #5. Make Eye contact.** While we often think drivers see us they sometimes don't. They may be distracted, talking on the phone or adjusting something in the car. Teach kids to make eye contact with drivers so they know the driver sees them before they step off the curb.
- #6. Be sure your bike fits you.** If your children are biking to school, be sure the bikes they use fit them. Children should be able to sit on the bike seat with their feet flat on the ground with 1-2 inches between the top bar and the child's body
- #7. Practice safe biking habits.** Require your kids to wear a helmet and to wear it correctly! Bike helmets, when properly fitted reduce the risk of head injury by 85%. Also teach them to always ride with both hands on their handlebars so they maintain control of their bikes.

Parents...

- #8. Slow down!** Follow the speed limit being especially alert in residential neighborhoods and school zones.
- #9. Be alert!** Take extra time to look for kids on or near the road walking or biking—especially during school hours.

#10. Don't be distracted! When you're behind the wheel concentrate on the road and your surroundings—avoid distractions such as talking on the phone, texting or looking for items you've dropped. Your attention needs to be on the road—a child's life may depend on that!

Coulee Region Childhood Obesity Coalition members encourage all children to commit to walking to school this fall rather than riding in a car. Walking to school is an easy way to get in the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity each day, can enhance academic performance, and helps create safer communities. Kids who walk or bike to school get to know their neighborhoods, learn independence and develop a feeling of belonging. Walking is a fun, healthy way for kids to travel to and from school. It'll teach them social and safety skills they'll use throughout their lives

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