

# Back-to-School Safety

## Riding the Bus

School bus transportation is safe.

In fact, buses are safer than cars! Even so, last year in the US, approximately 26 students were killed and another 9,000 were injured in incidents involving school buses. More often than not, these deaths and injuries didn't occur in a crash, but as the pupils were entering and exiting the bus. Remember these safety tips: Have a safe place to wait for your bus, away from traffic and the street.

Stay away from the bus until it comes to a complete stop and the driver signals you to enter.

When being dropped off, exit the bus and walk ten giant steps away from the bus. Keep a safe distance between you and the bus. Also, remember that the bus driver can see you best when you are back away from the bus.

Use the handrail to enter and exit the bus.

Stay away from the bus until the driver gives his/her signal that it's okay to approach.

Be aware of the street traffic around you. Drivers are required to follow certain rules of the road concerning school buses, however, not all do. Protect yourself and watch out!

## Walking and Biking to School

Even if you don't ride in a motor vehicle, you still have to protect yourself. Because of minimal supervision, young pedestrians face a wide variety of decisions making situations and dangers while walking to and from school. Here are a few basic safety tips to follow:

Mind all traffic signals and/or the crossing guard -- never cross the street against a light, even if you don't see any traffic coming.

Walk your bike through intersections.

Walk with a buddy.

Wear reflective material... it makes you more visible to street traffic.

### **Riding in a Car**

You might have heard before that most traffic crashes occur close to home ... they do.

Safety belts are the best form of protection passengers have in the event of a crash. They can lower your risk of injury by 45%.

You are four times more likely to be seriously injured or killed if ejected from the vehicle in a crash.

Everyone needs to be buckled up properly. That means older kids in seat belts, younger kids in booster seats and little kids in child safety seats.

### **A Back To School Checklist For Parents**

Be sure your child knows his or her home phone number and address, your work number, the number of another trusted adult, and how to use 911 for emergencies. Make sure your child has enough change to make a phone call or carries a telephone calling card. Plan a walking route to school or the bus stop. Choose the most direct way with the fewest street crossings and use intersections with crossing guards. Test the route with your child. Tell him or her to stay away from parks, vacant lots, fields, and other places where there aren't many people around. Teach children -- whether walking, biking, or riding the bus to school -- to obey all traffic signals, signs, traffic officers, and safety patrols. Remind them to be extra careful in rainy, foggy, or snowy weather. Make sure they walk to and from school with others -- a friend, neighbor, brother, sister. When car pooling, drop off and pick up children as close to school as possible. Don't leave until they have entered the school yard or building. Teach your child never to talk to strangers or accept rides or gifts from strangers. Remember, a stranger is anyone you or your children doesn't know well or doesn't trust.

**If your child is home alone for a few hours after school:**

Set up rules for locking doors and windows, answering the door or telephone. Make sure he or she checks in with you or a neighbor immediately after school. Agree on rules for inviting friends over and for going to a friend's house when no adult is home.

Take time to listen carefully to children's fears and feelings about people or places that scare them or make them feel uneasy. Tell them to trust their instincts. Take complaints about bullies and other concerns seriously.

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