

# Staying Safe While Walking

Walking is the most common and affordable form of exercise – and it is good for the environment too! But people traveling by foot or using a wheelchair are among the most vulnerable users of the road. On average in the U.S., 16 people die from traffic-related pedestrian injuries and 353 are treated in the emergency department everyday.<sup>i</sup> So before heading out the door, here are a few safety tips to keep in mind:



## Safety Tips

- **It's safest to walk on the sidewalk.** If one is not available, walk facing traffic.
- **Don't assume drivers will stop.** Make eye contact with the driver, not the vehicle. Don't count on drivers to pay attention.
- **Cross streets at marked crosswalks or intersections.** If available, cross the street at a designated crosswalk or intersection, where drivers are more likely to expect a person crossing the street.
- **Use extra caution when crossing multiple-lane, high-speed streets.** Even if one driver stops for you, do not presume drivers in other lanes can see you and will stop.
- **Stay visible at dusk and night.** Increase your visibility by carrying a flashlight, wearing retro-reflective clothing, and crossing the street in a well-lit area.
- **Avoid distractions (like electronic devices) that take your attention off the road.** Don't wear headphones or use a cell phone, especially while crossing the street.
- **Stay sober.** Alcohol and drugs can impair your ability to walk safely, just as they do with driving. In 2015, 34% of all pedestrians killed in traffic crashes had high blood alcohol concentrations.<sup>ii</sup>
- **Don't rely only on traffic lights.** Look left, right, and left again before crossing a street.
- **Watch for turning vehicles.** Before stepping into the street, make sure the driver sees you and will stop for you.

## Additional Safety Tips for Older Pedestrians

- **Cross when others are crossing.** There is safety in numbers.
- **Wait for a "fresh" green light when crossing at traffic signals.** By waiting for a "fresh" green light, you allow yourself the most time to cross the street safely.
- **Ask for help crossing the street.** Holding on to someone will allow you to move faster and be steadier on your feet than if you had no support.

## Additional Safety Tips for Younger Pedestrians

- **Be on the lookout for cars.** Before crossing, always look for cars even when a crossing guard, parent or other adult says it is okay to cross.
- **Walk - don't run - across the street.** Running can lead to tripping, falling or knocking someone else down. It also leaves less time for drivers to see you and react, and less time for you to see what is coming towards you.

## Report Safety Issues

**If you see something, say something.** Your local government is usually in charge of how streets and sidewalks look and are maintained. If you see broken sidewalks, don't have enough time to cross the street, or see any other safety issues, **call your local elected official's office.**

## References

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Image: Open source photo from Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center (PBIC) Image Library.

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<sup>i</sup> National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Traffic Safety Facts Research Note: 2016 Fatal Motor Vehicle Crashes: Overview. October 2017. DOT HS 812 456. Available at: <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812456>. Accessed October 10, 2018.

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<sup>ii</sup> National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Traffic Safety Facts 2015 Data – Pedestrians. Washington, DC: US Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration; 2017. Publication no. DOT-HS-812-375. Available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812375>. Accessed May 19, 2017.