

## **SHOULD YOUR CHILD CROSS THE STREETS ALONE?**

- Not if your child is 4 or 5 years old. There's no ability to gather information to make a safe judgement.
- Even if your child is bright, that child cannot make a conscious decision to cross.
- Your child's senses are still developing.
- Each time your child gets to a curb, the situation is different. (Crossing streets takes gathering information and making decisions.)



## **FOR REFERENCE**

You may be familiar with the AAA video *Children in Traffic*. It was updated and revised in 1999. It's 13 minutes long and well worth the \$40 that AAA charges.

This update presents real-life footage showing how children's perceptions of traffic differ from those of adults. It provides insight on why children behave unexpectedly and is a must-see for all drivers and youth traffic safety educators.

For more information, contact:  
AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety  
1-800-305-SAFE  
[http://www.aafts.org/Text/  
kidtraffPR.htm](http://www.aafts.org/Text/kidtraffPR.htm)

- Funded by a grant from the NYS Governor's Traffic Safety Committee.
- Source of information: Milwaukee Safety Commission Chapter of the National Safety Council.
- For more information about bicycle safety education materials, contact your local Cornell Cooperative Extension office or Lois Chaplin, Biological & Environmental Engineering Department, 326 Riley Robb Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853. Email: [lec4@cornell.edu](mailto:lec4@cornell.edu). Web: [www.bike.cornell.edu](http://www.bike.cornell.edu).

1/02 IB#12

## **YOUR CHILD'S SAFETY:**

### **Helping children avoid pedestrian traffic injuries**



Parents, are you aware of your child's ability to deal with traffic? Here are some facts that may help you and your child avoid traffic injuries.

### **CRASH PROFILE**

#### **When:**

- Ages 5, 6, and 7 have the greatest involvement.
- In good weather (April - October).
- During daylight hours.

#### **Where:**

- Usually in midblock.
- Where there is a lot of street parking.
- In neighborhoods where there is little yard space for play.

#### **How:**

- Children dart into the street for no apparent reason.
- Children run into the sides of cars.

## CHILDREN IN TRAFFIC

### **Hearing:**

- Difficulty picking out sounds and placing meaning to them.
- Tend to pick out sounds of interest to them (friends' voices over car engines).
- Difficulty determining sound, distance and location.

### **Height:**

- Difficult for them to see over objects that might be in the way (parked cars).
- Difficult for drivers to see them.

### **Vision:**

- Children lack peripheral vision until about age 7; they see 1/3 less that you do.
- Depth perception - difficulty judging how close or far objects (cars) are from them.
- Difficulty judging whether object is coming or going, moving or standing still.

### **How Children Think:**

- No concept of danger, being injured or killed. Don't understand the concept of death until age 9.
- View drivers as friendly adults who would never hurt them.
- View cars as alive and friendly, as something that would never hurt them.
- Mix the worlds of pretend and reality.

- Perceive themselves as strong and indestructible (like cartoons on TV).
- Impatient and impulsive; they often run unexpectedly into the street.
- Concentrate on one thing at a time (the friend across the street, not the traffic).
- Lack of knowledge or understanding of complex traffic situations or rules.
- Believe if they can see the car, the driver sees them, even if they are standing behind something.
- Don't understand the car takes time and distance to stop. They think cars stop as quickly as they do.
- Interpret driver's meaning of blowing the horn as "It's okay to cross."
- May confuse eye contact as "He sees me, it's okay to cross."
- Don't realize drivers pay more attention to other things than just their crossing the street.



## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Take your children for a walk and let them practice decision-making as to when it is safe to cross.
- Ask questions like: "Which car is closer? Which is moving faster? Which one is moving farthest away?"
- Practice crossing by stopping at the curb and looking.
- Exaggerate your head movement. Let your child imitate.
- Teach what to look for and where to look.
- Be patient and set good examples. Children learn by imitation and will do what you do.
- Explore other options rather than letting younger children walk to school or to the bus stop alone. Options might include an older student, neighbor, babysitter, grandparent, or another responsible adult.
- Children learn by repetition. Be sure to reinforce--ESPECIALLY IN THE SPRING!
- Don't let your children cross streets unsupervised when they're too young!
- Check their skills. Then you'll know when they're ready to cross.