

Skills your child is learning

Each child develops at their own pace. Never underestimate your child's capacity to explore an increasingly expanding world. Exposure to the risk of injury increases as your child's co-ordination and mobility skills improve. As your child continues to grow, social interaction with other children becomes important. An expanded physical world challenges your child's experience, knowledge and lack of fear. Confronted by new adventures your child is exposed to a broad range of preventable injuries.

Common causes of injury/death involving motor vehicles and toys with wheels

Motor vehicle related injuries account for more than one in four preventable injuries to children less than five years of age. They include:

- Vehicle driveway accidents, mostly by four wheel drivers.
- Use of inappropriate or incorrectly fitted child restraints
- Overheating when left alone in the car
- Failure to use protective equipment when riding scooters, bicycles and skateboards
- Inadequate supervision in the street and in car parks.

Starting out safely

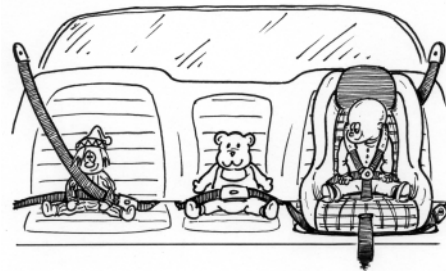
Walking and playing are important parts of a child's life. They are important for a child's health, fitness and the development of independence and self esteem. Pedestrian injury is a leading cause of child injury in Australia. Every week a child pedestrian is killed and another 25 will be admitted to hospital. While most child pedestrians are injured in traffic, around one child each month is run over in the driveway, typically by a large vehicle reversing.

Fence off a dedicated child's play area away from driveways and the street. Ideally locate the play area within sight of the primary workplace in the house such, as the kitchen or living area.

- Make sure you know where your child is especially when visitors arrive and leave.
- Always walk right around the car before backing out.
- Correctly position side mirrors fitted to your car so that you can see the rear door handles and improve your view when reversing.

Child restraints

A child in a correctly fitted restraint is safer than any other occupant in a car. Yet an RACV survey showed that three in four children are at risk of injury due to incorrect installation or harnessing of a child into the restraint. This checklist will assist you to maximise the benefits of a child restraint.



Your child restraint must be firmly strapped in with the adult seatbelt to minimise any movement.

- A correctly installed and appropriate child restraint can reduce the potential for injury in a crash by 70%.
- Make sure that the restraint harness fits snugly against the upper torso and does not cut across the neck.
- The harness should be firm enough to prevent the child wriggling free. The best test is to squeeze two fingers between the child's body and the harness without causing any discomfort.
- Check with a professional fitter to ensure that your child restraint is correctly fitted.
- Select the right time to promote your child into a booster seat for use with an adult seatbelt.
- Generally, rearward facing travel is safer than a child facing forward.
- Child restraints usually offer greater protection than booster seats. So don't be tempted to move your child to a bigger restraint too soon.
- Once your baby reaches 8-9 kilograms you have some decisions to make about what to do next. Go to the Kidsafe website www.kidsafe.com.au for help to choose the appropriate child restraint for your child's size and development.
- A child who is promoted to an adult seat belt too early is exposed to three times more risk of injury than a child in a booster seat. Injuries often occur to the head and can be serious or life threatening.

For a child weighing more than 14 kilograms choose a booster seat that has the following features. They provide maximum protection for your child.

- Side wings are important in protecting the child's head when asleep and from injury caused by a side collision.
- A seatbelt guide will ensure that the seatbelt does not cut across the child's neck.
- If possible, use a booster seat with a crotch strap that will prevent the child from slipping underneath the harness.

At play

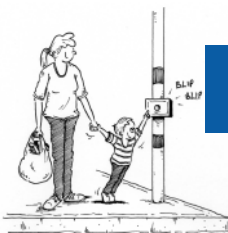
Toys with wheels will be greatly enjoyed by your child. A few simple guidelines will reduce the risk of bruises, abrasions and fractures.

Insist your child wears a safety helmet, wrist guard, knee and elbow pads.

- Tricycles and scooters need to be the right size for your child.
- Learning to ride needs to take place in a safe area away from traffic, on even surfaces with ample space and constant adult supervision.
- Avoid poorly made products that may have unprotected handlebars, nuts or bolts or sharp edges.

In the street

Your child will copy what they see adults in their lives do when driving a car or as a pedestrian on the street. Make sure you set a good example for them to copy and explain to them what you are doing within the street environment. Children learn most in their first years of life.



Always hold your child's hand

- Stop at driveways and tell your child you are looking to see if there are any cars coming. Reversing lights, alarms, engine noise and exhaust emissions are all things to point out.
- Choose safe places to cross roads, at a pedestrian facility or where there is a good view of traffic. Ask your child to tell you what traffic they can see.
- Point out any road signs, traffic signals and road markings and tell your child what they mean.

Heat stress

On a typical Australian summer day the temperature inside a parked car can be as much as 40 degrees hotter than the outside temperature. This increase occurs within five minutes of closing the car door. A child begins to dehydrate immediately the car door is closed. The child will become increasingly distressed as the temperature rises. The heat, reduced body fluids and lack of air circulation can all lead to death.

Always take your child with you after parking your car, even to run a quick errand. Never leave your child unattended.

- Always remain conscious that your child can be at risk of injury even when unattended for only a few minutes.
- It is not reasonable to make older siblings responsible for their younger brother or sister.
- Leaving the window open a few centimetres will not prevent the temperature from rising. A child will almost certainly become distressed if left unattended and possibly try to get out of a restraint, risking strangulation.
- A child moving freely in the car may inadvertently release the hand break, shift gears or access harmful products.

It is a challenge to control young children exiting from the car when going shopping, to kindergarten, to family day care, the child care centre or other outings.

- Always disembark to the road side kerb.
- Insist that older children remain in the car until you organise the baby out of the car.

Holiday travel

- Where possible, plan long journeys for the cooler hours of the day.
- Dress children appropriately in hot weather to promote ample air flow around their bodies.
- Double check that the child restraint harness fits the child snugly. The difference between light summer clothing and winter woollies will affect how well it performs.
- Provide plenty of cool fluids, preferably water, and offer them to your child regularly.
- Make frequent stops, at least every two hours, so that all the family can stretch and relax.