

## Pedestrian Safety – The Facts

Injuries are the number one cause of death and disability among children and youth in Canada

While the number of Canadian children injured or killed in pedestrian-related incidents continues to decline, each fatality remains a tragedy – most often a preventable one<sup>1</sup>. Injuries to child pedestrians can often be severe, and even though a youngster may survive, recovery can include long-term disabilities, emotional strain and financial burdens that may be experienced by children and their families for many years, and can last a lifetime.

It is important to remember that children are still developing and may not have the skill sets needed to accurately judge and manoeuvre within risky situations, particularly unfamiliar ones, such as road crossing and traffic. It has been recommended that younger children receive training around appropriate safe walking techniques<sup>2</sup>.

Did you know?

- Research suggests that children’s cognitive skill development is related to increased pedestrian safety, as the relevant skills needed to safely cross the street (such as decision-making, recognizing risks, and processing speed) improve as children get older<sup>3</sup>.
- The simple presence of a parent or caregiver while crossing the street can help to protect children from pedestrian injuries<sup>3</sup>.
- American research shows that between the ages for 4 through 12, most pedestrian injuries occur in mid-block areas, where children enter into the middle of the street and are struck by moving vehicles, or at intersections<sup>3</sup>.
- The majority of pedestrian injuries and deaths occur in urban areas.<sup>2</sup> However, when a pedestrian is hit on a rural road, the result is more likely to be fatal because of higher vehicle speeds<sup>4</sup>.
- Pedestrian related injuries tend to happen more in the autumn and winter months, one reason being the reduced amount of daylight<sup>4</sup>. Lighting is a clear issue, as Canadian reports have shown that between 2004 and 2008, 60% of pedestrians were fatally injured at night or in dim light conditions when drivers did not see them<sup>2</sup>.
- In Canada between 2004 and 2008, 20% of fatally injured pedestrians under the age of 16 had run out into the street before the collision<sup>2</sup>.
- There tends to be an increased amount of danger to children in areas with heavy traffic volumes, a high density of pedestrians and limited

choices for play, such as a neighbourhood park<sup>4</sup>.

- Traffic calming measures and the presence of recreational areas (e.g., playgrounds) have been shown to be associated with less pedestrian injury and increased walking, an important factor within healthy lifestyles<sup>5</sup>.
- While boys have the highest rates of pedestrian injuries and deaths, recent reviews have demonstrated that the gender gap appears to be fairly small.

References:

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