

Safety Tips for Walkers & Bikers

Here are some tips for parents that will help kids learn to travel safely:

- If kids will be walking to school on their own, you should go with them the first few times. This way, you can identify dangers and direct children to the safest possible route.
- When it comes to crossing streets, children need to be aware of all the different ways cars can cross their path. Explain the rules of the road and give children real-life examples while your family is out walking together.
- Explain any pedestrian signals or other traffic controls that they may encounter along the way. You should make sure your children know how important it is to cross streets at the appropriate times in the appropriate places.
- Make sure that their kids' bikes are the correct size and have fully operational brakes, chains and reflectors.
- A child should have a certified bike helmet and know how to wear it properly.
- If your child is old enough to ride their bikes with traffic, teach them how to use hand signals.
- Teach your children how to deal with strangers and point out safe places to go if they need help on their route to school.
- Walk and bike with your kids as often as possible. This demonstrates safe behavior and shows your children that physical activity is an important and fun part of life!

For more information, visit
www.dot.state.mn.us/mnsaferoutes/

Healthy Kids Need...

Safe Routes To School!

How a child gets between home and school may not seem like a big deal, but there can be amazing ripple effects from this seemingly unimportant decision.

Check out all the ways that "getting a move on" to and from school benefits both our kids and our community as a whole:



1. Walking and biking to school provides more daily opportunities for kids to be active.

The American Heart Association recommends that every day, ALL children over age 2 should:

- Participate in at least 60 minutes of enjoyable, moderate-intensity physical activities that are developmentally appropriate and varied.
- Or they should at least participate in two 30-minute periods (or four 15-minute periods) in which they can engage in vigorous activities that are appropriate to their age and stage of physical and emotional development.
- Give walking to school a try on October 10. It's "Walk to School Day!" sawtoothmountainclinic.org/event/international-walk-bike-to-school-day/

2. Getting to school by walking or biking "wakes up" kids' brains, and helps them get ready to learn.

Physical activity benefits children's ability to learn, supports their brain functioning, and can even improve their behavior. Ultimately, all these benefits support academic achievement.

3. Walking and biking are beneficial to physical and mental health. These activities are good for our hearts, lungs, bones, muscles and joints, can reduce the risk of diabetes and some cancers in adulthood, help with weight and blood pressure control, and can improve emotional well-being.

4. Being active between home and school is good for the entire family. It's a great time to connect and talk about the day, model active lifestyle choices, and can save money on transportation costs.

5. Active transportation is good for our whole community, too. When we make it safer for kids to walk and bike to school, those same improvements also make it safer for our elders and neighbors with disabilities. Everyone should be able to move safely around their community.

6. The more kids and family members that are walking and biking, the more "eyes on the street" our community has. This improves safety and adds a sense of security for everyone. As drivers get used to sharing the road with pedestrians and bicyclists, they may be more likely to slow down, stay watchful, and yield.

Taking care of ourselves can take a lot of support. We're here to help! Ask a nurse or provider if you'd like to talk.

Breaking Down Barriers

In 1969, about half the school-age kids in America walked or biked to school. By 2009, that number had fallen to just 13%. What's gotten in the way of kids being active as they get to and from school?

Some of the most commonly mentioned barriers to walking/biking to school are:

#1 - Distance

As of May of 2018, between 8 - 10% of students at ISD 166 and between 6 - 20% of students at GES walked/biked to or from school. For many kids in Cook County and Grand Portage, the distance from school is considerable, and riding to town in a vehicle is the only real option. But does this mean they have to miss out on the many benefits of a morning wake-up walk or an afternoon wind-down bike ride? No! Perhaps they could walk to the bus stop, or parents could make drop-off and pick-up a distance from school. This can give kids an opportunity to move and save parents from having to navigate the traffic at school.

#2 - Traffic Related Danger

Ironically, this problem can be part of a vicious cycle: Parents perceive walking and biking routes as being heavily trafficked and dangerous, so they respond by driving their children to and from school. This unintentionally adds to the congestion and traffic danger around the school. Kids and families walking and biking to school can take cars off the road and decrease traffic.

#3 - Weather Conditions

While many adults walked to school in the snow (and uphill, both ways), the new societal norm is to drive everywhere, even when the weather is nice. Luckily, we're pretty hardy here in the north woods. It's common for adults and kids alike to just pull on boots and a raincoat and keep going.

#4 - Crime Danger

The world can seem like a scary place, and sending our kids out in it alone can seem like a foolish choice. Fortunately, the data tells a safer story. The number of children that fall victim to crime while walking/biking to school is extremely small. In fact, the more kids and families biking/walking to school means more "eyes on the street," which can make everyone feel safer and more secure. For more information, visit www.guide.saferoutesinfo.org/introduction/the_decline_of_walking_and_bicycling.cfm

Clearing the Path

We can make it easier and safer for kids to bike and walk to school by taking a comprehensive approach. Our local SRTS group has been working since 2009 on the "6 E's" of Safe Routes To School.

#1 - Engineering

Improving our built environment means making improvements to our streets, trails, and sidewalks. Reducing vehicle speeds, building sidewalks and crossings, and keeping them accessible makes walking and biking safer for everyone.

#2 - Enforcement

Ensuring that drivers, bicyclists, and walkers obey traffic laws improves safety for all users. This can be things like cross-walk enforcements and having crossing-guard programs.

#3 - Education

Teaching kids about safe biking and walking behaviors and giving them the support they need to improve their bike-riding skills helps ensure that they can hit the road safely.

#4 - Encouragement

Making active transportation the norm means encouraging students and their families to give it a try! This can help build support throughout the community, including elected officials and other community leaders.

#5 - Equity

Everyone should have access to safe roads and sidewalks, regardless of the neighborhood in which they live, what transportation options they have available, or their physical capabilities.

#6 - Evaluation

Are the actions we're taking moving us closer to our goals? The only way to know is to evaluate them, and make "course corrections" if needed. To learn more about the 6 E's of Safe Routes To School, visit www.dot.state.mn.us/mnsaferoutes/basics/program-elements.html