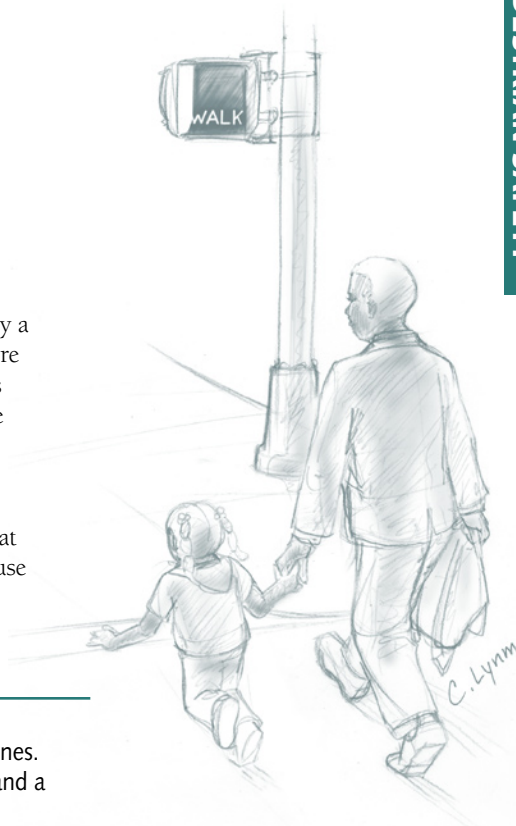


Pedestrian Safety

With so many vehicles on the road, pedestrians need to be aware of their surroundings and the “rules of the road” to avoid being hit by a car or other motor vehicle. In 2000, over 4700 US pedestrians were killed and 78 000 injured when struck by a motor vehicle. Older pedestrians are at especially high risk. Nighttime is a particularly dangerous time because visibility is reduced, and both pedestrians and drivers may be more likely to have been drinking alcohol.

The November 6, 2002, issue of *JAMA* includes a study reporting that the risk of older pedestrians being struck by a car or truck was particularly high at marked crosswalks with no traffic signal or stop sign. This might occur because marked crosswalks may give older pedestrians a false sense of security.



SAFETY FIRST

Pedestrian injuries and deaths may be reduced by following some simple guidelines. If you follow these rules, walking can be a safe and enjoyable form of exercise and a great way to get around town.

- Cross streets at intersections. Be sure to look left, then right, and then left again before crossing a street even if you have the right of way (a marked crosswalk, walk signal, or green light for traffic in the direction you are going). Continue to look left and right as you cross to be sure cars aren't coming.
- Dress in light clothing if you are walking at night—cars may not be able to see you if you are wearing dark clothes.
- Obey the Walk/Don't Walk signals at intersections. Cross only if the Walk signal is on when you start to cross. If you see a flashing Don't Walk signal when you get to the corner, wait until the next Walk signal to cross. If you are crossing and the Don't Walk signal starts flashing, continue to cross the street—you will have enough time to get across.
- Hold a child's hand when he or she is crossing the street.
- Obey pedestrian signs at construction zones.
- Always walk on the sidewalk if one is available. If there isn't a sidewalk, walk facing traffic so that you can see cars coming and drivers can see you.

Even though pedestrians' routes are often the same every day (to and from work, the grocery store, school, etc), it is important to remember to be aware of what is going on around you and to follow these simple safety suggestions.

Sources: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, US Department of Transportation, National Safe Kids Campaign, American College of Emergency Physicians

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
888/327-4236
www.nhtsa.dot.gov
- US Department of Transportation
202/366-4000
www.tfhrc.gov

INFORM YOURSELF

To find this and previous JAMA Patient Pages, go to the Patient Page index on JAMA's Web site at www.jama.com. They are available in English and Spanish. A Patient Page on vehicle safety and children was published in the March 6, 2002, issue.

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