



TRAFFIC - A CHILD'S POINT OF VIEW

Research on children in traffic suggests that children perceive traffic very differently than adults.

Did you know?

- There are 26 judgment skills needed to cross a street safely; this is a very complicated task, particularly in high speed, high volume traffic environments.
- Until a child is about 8 years of age, it is difficult for them to assess whether a vehicle is moving or not.
- Children have difficulty judging the speed and distance of cars.
- When a child sees an approaching car, the first thing they note is the colour of the car; they are not thinking about how fast that car is travelling
- Children assume that cars can stop instantly.
- Children think that if they can see a car, the driver can see them.
- Children perceive big cars as travelling faster than small cars.
- Children perceive wide streets as dangerous and narrow streets as safe.
- Children make potentially dangerous decisions about "gap acceptance"- they do not have the ability to estimate whether there is sufficient time to cross the road and avoid a collision - especially as vehicle speeds increase.
- Children cannot perceive complicated traffic situations, nor can they anticipate what movements a vehicle might make.
- As children are short in stature; parked cars, utility poles, newspaper stands, real estate signs, etc easily obstruct a child's field of vision.
- A child's peripheral vision is not fully developed; their field of vision is one-third narrower than that of an adult.
- Children have difficulty discriminating the direction of sounds.
- Children are easily distracted when searching for traffic: they concentrate on one thing at a time, often focusing on what is of interest to them at the moment.
- Children have no sense of danger - they intertwine fantasy and reality and tend to overestimate their knowledge and physical strength.
- Most pedestrian traffic injuries occur to 5 - 9 year olds at mid-block crossings, and to 10 - 14 year olds at intersections.
- *Speaking with children about traffic rules does not lead to safer behaviours. Walking with children and negotiating neighbourhood streets with them provides an experience and opportunity to develop traffic safety awareness, and to practice safe pedestrian skills.*

This list has been adapted from the Pedestrian Crossing Control Manual for British Columbia and a list distributed by the Canadian Institute of Child Health.

