

## School Zone Safety

### Walking To School

In the "olden days," children walked to school all the time from great distances. Certainly times have changed, but there are safe ways to recapture this healthy tradition and the benefits of doing so are many!



#### WALKING SAFELY

- Walk with your child to school
- Organize with your neighbours to have children walk together
- Teach your children the safe way to cross streets and intersections (use sidewalks, make eye contact with motorists, make sure vehicles have stopped completely, cross with crossing guards where available)
- Avoid distractions (do not text and remove earbuds while walking or biking, especially when crossing the road)

#### BENEFITS OF ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

- Good exercise, a healthy part of the day for your child—and you!
- Less vehicles (congestion, pollution) in school zones
- Encourages responsibility even at a young age

Congestion in school zones has become a growing concern in Peel Region as children are dropped off and picked up in the morning and afternoon. Children often dart in between parked and idling cars of waiting parents. In addition to being an issue of safety, the idling cars harm the environment and everyone's health as smog fills the air, making it more difficult to breathe. Reviving an old trend of **walking to school** has a positive impact on our health, safety, environment and community.

Following are a few ideas on how to increase the number of walkers at your school:

- International Walk to School Day is an international yearly event that takes place every October. It was initiated to encourage children to walk to school, with the hope of developing a lifelong habit. This is an opportunity for a school to launch or continue an Active and Safe Routes to School program
- Walking School Bus is a program where two or more families can walk to school together with adult supervision. It's a great way to increase student's physical activity and reduce traffic congestion. Parents who walk their children to school can meet new people, and get active themselves
- Walking Wednesdays (or Footloose Fridays or...): Schools can initiate a "Walking Day/Event" on a designated day to encourage students to walk to school weekly or monthly. Student Frequent Walker Cards can be given to students and checked off every time they walk to school. Once the student has checked off 10 sections, they are eligible to win a special prize

- Walk a block: Parents are encouraged to park their vehicles a few blocks from the school, then walk the remaining distance with their children. This will decrease traffic congestion and pollution around the school
- Walking Buddies: Older students enjoy the responsibility that comes from walking safely together and looking out for younger students.

### Biking To School

The benefits to those who walk to school can also be applied to cyclists. Following are some tips to keep bikes and their riders safe on their "commute" to school:

#### EQUIPMENT

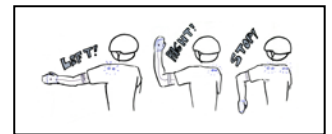
Every young cyclist needs:

- A helmet that fits properly (it's the law!)
- A bell, a front and rear light and reflectors on their bicycle (it's the law!)
- Appropriate clothing:
  - Bright colours during the day, reflective material at night; closed shoes, shoe laces properly tied; secured pant leg to avoid catching in the bike chain.



#### FIVE POINT SAFETY CHECK FOR BIKES

- Firm brakes;
- Correct seat height;
- Correct tire pressure;
- Secure tire wheel nuts; and
- Tight handlebars.



#### RIDING

The rules of the road are the same for bicycles and cars. As a rider, you should:

- Think for yourself, ride single file and in a straight line;
- Ride in a predictable way and be aware of what is around you;
- Be aware of car doors that might open in your path;
- Keep both hands on the handle bars unless signaling;
- Make eye contact with motorists to ensure they see you;
- Ensure cars have stopped in all lanes before proceeding;
- Walk your bicycle on school property and in crosswalks

#### THINK SAFETY FIRST

It may take extra time to act safely, but one minute more is always worth preventing accident or injury when it comes to your children and their friends

City of Mississauga Traffic Safety Council:

<http://www.mississauga.ca/portal/residents/trafficsafetycouncil>

Safe Routes to School: [www.saferoutestoschool.ca](http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca)

Ministry of Transportation Cycling Guide:

<http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/safety/bicycle-safety.shtm>

The Traffic Safety Times is a publication of the Traffic Safety Council (TSC), an advisory committee of the Council of the City of Mississauga. TSC considers matters related to the safety of students and makes recommendations to Council designed and intended to protect elementary and secondary students from the dangers of vehicular traffic and related hazards.

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