

School dismissal a dangerous time for kids getting hit by cars

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Study authors and expert say better supervision, less smartphone use might cut the risk.

(HealthDay)—Children are at greatest risk of being hit by a car at the end of the school day, as well as in the evening, a new study finds.

One expert wasn't surprised by the findings.

The after-school hours are "times when [adult supervision](#) may not be ideal," said Dr. Robert Glatter, an [emergency physician](#) at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City.

"Having increased police awareness and school-sponsored safety patrols available when afternoon caregivers cannot be present may help to reduce the risk," said Glatter, who was not involved in the new research.

The study was led by Dr. Alexa Karkenny of Jacobi Medical Center in New York City. Her team looked at the medical records of 79 boys and 21 girls, average age 8 years, who were struck by vehicles in 2012 in Philadelphia. The most common types of injuries were thigh, shin and ankle fractures.

The children were most likely to be hit after leaving school (29 percent of injuries) and during the evening (42 percent of injuries), the researchers reported. Injuries were also more frequent in June and other spring months, and when children were not with their parents (60 percent of injuries).

According to the researchers, efforts to reduce children's risk of being hit by vehicles should focus on improving supervision when they leave school at the end of the day and boosting road safety in school zones.

Glatter agreed, and offered up a number of suggestions to improve kids' safety.

"Having school safety officers present during [school](#) dismissal time may help to reduce risk for such injuries," he said. Parents should "maintain close communications with their teens and children to ensure added safety," Glatter said.

Also, distracted kids are less safe on the street, Glatter said. "Banning smartphone use while walking in streets and crosswalks is one way to reduce distraction and potentially reduce risk for auto versus pedestrian injuries," he suggested.

"Having teens and adolescents sign a pact with parents that focuses on good communication, no texting while walking, along with a greater awareness of potential risks for being struck by a motor vehicle may help to reduce risk for injuries," Glatter said.

The study was to be presented this week at the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons' annual meeting in Las Vegas. The data and conclusions should be viewed as preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers [pedestrian safety tips](#).

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