

Expert offers school bus safety tips

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Many injuries occur getting on and off the bus.

(HealthDay)—School bus safety is one of the many things parents need to review with their children before the start of the new school year, an expert says.

Between 2004 and 2013, school transportation-related crashes in the United States claimed more than 1,300 lives. That's an average of 134 deaths a year, according to the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

"As families begin to prepare for [children](#) returning to school, it's important for parents and children to go over school [bus](#) safety tips together. This will help ensure a safe, enjoyable start to the school year for everyone," Dawne Gardner, injury prevention coordinator at the Comprehensive Children's Injury Center at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, said in a hospital news release.

Many injuries occur when children are boarding or exiting a [school bus](#),

research shows.

"A blind spot extends about 10-feet in front of the bus, obstructing the driver's view. Oftentimes, children are not aware of this blind spot and might mistakenly believe that if they can see the bus, the [bus driver](#) can see them," Gardner said.

Kids need to be taught to avoid the school bus "danger zone" by staying 10-feet away from the front or back of the bus, which enables the driver to see them, experts advise.

Children should arrive at the school bus stop at least five minutes before the expected arrival of the bus, Gardner suggested. This will prevent them from running across the street to get on the bus when it arrives or running after the bus if it's already left the bus stop.

In addition, children should stand at least three giant steps back from the curb as the bus approaches and should never move towards the bus until it has stopped and the driver opens the door, she said.

And parents should tell children to avoid horseplay while waiting for the bus, Gardner said.

Youngsters should always use the handrail when boarding the bus. If a child drops something, he or she should tell the bus driver and make sure the driver is able to see them before they pick up the dropped item.

Parents should teach kids to check that their backpack straps, drawstrings, scarves and loose clothing cannot get caught on the bus handrail, door or seats. They should also instruct children to keep bus aisles clear of backpacks or books; to never push or shove other students; to never throw objects into, out of, or inside the bus; and to remain seated, facing forward at all times during the bus ride.

Children shouldn't get out of their seat until the bus comes to a full stop, and should use handrails when leaving the bus. If a child needs to cross a street after exiting the bus, he or she should take five giant steps from the front of the bus, make eye contact with the bus driver, and start to cross when the driver indicates it's safe, Gardner explained.

And all parents should make sure that they teach their children to look left, right and left again before crossing a street, she added.

More information: The U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has more about [school buses](#).

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