



# Walking to school

**If your child is walking to school for the first time this year, take a few moments to think about how you will prepare your child to stay safe along the way.**



## Walk the route with your child

Before school starts, walk the route together and talk about the things your child needs to remember along the way – staying on the footpath or if there isn't a footpath, walking along the nature strip as far away from traffic as possible, and facing oncoming traffic.

## Hold your child's hand

As you leave your house you are very likely to be near a road even if it is a quiet road. Always hold your child's hand. You just never know when your child might stumble or do something unpredictable that could put them in front of an oncoming vehicle.

## Teach your child the basic rules about being a pedestrian while you're walking with them

You can practise the rules about the road and traffic with your child during your walks. Make it fun by playing 'I Spy' with the road signs or street names. Praise your child when they get it right. In this way, by the time your child is old enough to walk to school without your help, none of the pedestrian road rules should come as a surprise to them.

## Always stop, look, listen and think before stepping onto the road

Each time you cross the road make sure your child stops back from the kerb. Train your child to use both their eyes and ears when checking for traffic. Tell your child to look in all directions and listen for traffic that they cannot see. Be sure to tell your child not to rely only on their hearing as some newer vehicles can be extremely quiet.

## Ask your child questions about what they'd do in certain situations when you're walking

When you come to a crossing, ask your child what they should do. You should expect your child to answer something like: 'I stop, look in all ways to check the cars are actually stopping before I cross and only when I am sure they've stopped can I go across'.

## Explain why paying attention when walking is important

This doesn't just mean the obvious hazards like speeding cars but also less evident ones such as cars coming around corners suddenly or vehicles not stopping at pedestrian crossings. Explaining the reasons for staying alert while walking helps children to understand more clearly why something is expected of them, especially if they know the consequences of not paying adequate attention or of not practising basic safety precautions.