



It's Back-To-School Time : Tips To Keep Students Safe While Getting To & From School

As students from kindergarten through high school return to the classroom, they'll be getting there in all kinds of ways—riding the bus, biking, walking, riding in a car, or on an ATV/UTV. No matter how they travel, these tips can help keep their journey to and from school safe.

School Bus Safety

While school buses are one of the safest ways to get to school, students can help make the ride even safer by following a few simple rules:



- ♦ **Wear a seatbelt if the bus has one.** Seatbelts only work if they're used—and they help keep students safely in their seats in case of a sudden stop or crash.
- ♦ **Stay safe outside the bus.** Most injuries happen outside the vehicle, not inside. Because buses have large blind spots, it's important to **stand at least three giant steps** away from the curb while waiting. After getting off, **move away from the bus immediately.**
- ♦ **Board quickly and sit properly.** When you get on, go straight to your seat, sit facing forward, and keep the aisle clear. Take off your backpack so you can sit all the way back against the seat.

Bike Safety

Biking is a fun, healthy way to get to school—and a great way to stay active! So grab your bike, helmet, and lock, and get ready to roll into the school year safely.

- ♦ **Always wear a helmet.** It's one of the most important parts of bike safety. We offer helmets for all ages—from infants to adults—at our office. Call us at **701.780.1489** to get one at a reduced cost or **FOR FREE** if cost is a barrier.
- ♦ **Follow the rules of the road.** Students should know how to stop at stop signs, signal their turns, and ride with the flow of traffic—just like a car.
- ♦ **One rider per bike.** Bikes are built for one person. Don't carry passengers on pegs, handlebars, or the seat.



Pedestrian Safety



Walking to school is a great way for kids to stay active—but it's important to stay safe along the way.

Parents should know that children typically don't develop the ability to accurately judge the speed and distance of oncoming cars until around age 10. That means even if your child knows the route, they may still need help making safe choices when crossing streets. If your child is walking or biking, consider going with them—especially in the early grades.

- ◆ **Use crosswalks and look both ways.** Before crossing the street, stop and look **left, right, then left again**—and keep looking while you cross. Glance over your shoulder too, just in case a vehicle is coming from behind.
- ◆ **No earbuds or distractions.** Students should avoid wearing headphones or using phones while walking or biking. They need to stay alert and aware of their surroundings at all times. Remember: **in a collision between a car and a pedestrian, the car always wins—no matter who had the right-of-way.**

Motor Vehicle Safety

Whether students are being dropped off, riding in a carpool, or driving themselves, car safety is key.

- ◆ **Kids 12 and under should ride in the back seat.** Front-seat airbags are designed to protect adults and older teens—but can seriously injure younger children.
- ◆ **Use the proper car or booster seat.** Follow state laws, and keep children in a booster seat until the seat belt fits them correctly (lap belt low on the hips, shoulder belt across the chest—not the neck or face).
- ◆ **Exit on the curb side.** Always have children get out of the car on the grass or sidewalk side to avoid stepping into traffic.
- ◆ **Teen drivers need to stay focused.** Make sure student drivers always wear seat belts, put away their phones, and limit distractions. Drivers are also responsible for ensuring every passenger is properly buckled in or in the correct car seat. If carpooling, make sure there are enough seats and restraints for everyone.



ATV/UTV Safety

ATVs and UTVs are becoming more common ways for students to get to school—but they come with serious risks, especially for younger riders.

Many students using these vehicles are under the legal driving age, and **Safe Kids** and the **American Academy of Pediatrics** recommend that youth under **16** not operate ATVs or UTVs. These vehicles require physical strength and control that younger riders often don't yet have—especially if the vehicle starts to tip. We'll be sharing more detailed safety tips soon, but for now, keep these important reminders in mind:



- ◆ **ATVs (and many UTVs) lack basic safety features** like airbags, seatbelts, or rollover bars. That means there's little protection in a crash. If you're going to drive one, take a certified safety course and **always wear the proper gear**, including a helmet.
- ◆ **Only carry the number of riders the vehicle is designed for.** Extra passengers throw off the vehicle's balance and make it more likely to tip over.



Altru Health System is proud to serve as the lead agency for Safe Kids Grand Forks. For more information on this and other childhood injury prevention topics, visit safekidsgf.com, call us at 701.780.1489 or email safekids@altru.org.



This information is brought to you by Safe Kids Grand Forks and our partners at Vision Zero.