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## FamilyEducation

# Neighborhood Safety Guide

### Safety First!

Warmer weather and lengthening hours of daylight beckon, and kids are answering the call. You can help keep them safe by reviewing some of the simple safety rules below.

### Wooded Areas

1. Brief your children on what to do if they get lost in the woods after dark. Let them know that their best survival bet, if lost, is to stay in one place and wait to be found.
2. Equip your children with a small penlight attached to a key chain or clipped to the inside of a jacket or coat. Tell them it's not a toy and should only be used for emergencies.
3. Attach a small whistle to the zipper of a coat. A whistle is an ideal signaling device, if a child is lost or hurt.

### Dark and Dusk

Rising temperatures and increasing hours of daylight bring with them a corresponding increase in traffic accidents involving kids and cars. The periods of greatest risk are the hours just before and after sunset. During periods of twilight, visibility is limited and a driver's depth perception is reduced by low light levels.

1. All evening play clothes (especially jackets, coats, and wind breakers) should have reflective cloth strips. So should bikes, helmets, and backpacks.
2. Evening strolls should include a flashlight — especially if all or most of the walking is alongside roads and streets without sidewalks.
3. Bike riding should be specifically prohibited, unless the bike has been equipped with reflectors, head lamps, and other night-riding safety features.

### Playing in the Street

City streets and country roads aren't playgrounds, and we don't advise that kids use them as such. However, if you do allow your kids to play in the street or on lightly traveled roads, please follow a few commonsense safety tips.

1. Stop all play when a vehicle is spotted; move to the side of the road and resume play only after the vehicle has passed.
2. Use inexpensive traffic cones marked "Play Area Ahead" to advise drivers that kids may be in the road ahead. Cones should be placed on the center line, so as not to block traffic a few hundred feet away from the play area. Remove cones when kids are finished playing or bike riding.

### Water Areas

Ponds, swamps, streams, and rivers are prone to flooding in the spring from melting snow, and the icy water poses a significant threat to the health and safety of kids who aren't "water wise." The risk of drowning or hypothermia can be greatly reduced by following these simple safety rules:

1. Stay away from rivers and streams during spring floods. Swiftly moving water, even a few inches deep, can easily knock children off their feet and quickly carry them beyond the reach of safety.
2. Banks of rivers and streams are very unstable and prone to collapse during periods of high water. Stay away.
3. Do not trust spring ice on ponds and lakes. Warm days and cold nights result in weak and mushy ice. Stay off the ice.

Bottom line? Let your kids know that safety rules aren't designed to ruin anyone's fun. Tell them to play hard, play fast, and play smart. Enjoy!