

Car Park Safety Management

Every year in Australia hundreds of children are killed in driveway and car park accidents, and thousands more are injured (Kidsafe, 2018). However many of these 'accidents' are avoidable.

Children younger than 10 or 11 need consistent supervision when in the car park or near a road, and until age 8 should always hold an adult's hand. Until about age 12, children don't have a strong understanding of the consequences of unsafe behaviour around cars, and children under 5 are even more unpredictable and extremely fast. While they can frequently tell you the rules of the car park and being near roads, in reality, they are frequently distracted by something and only able to focus on one thing at a time. In addition, they do not have the development to be able to judge how far away a car is, or how fast it is travelling.

CAR PARK PROTOCOL

Please use the following to guide your behaviour in the car park:

- **Always hold your child's hand when in the car park** or near the road and explain why this is important. **If you are not able to hold your child's hand, have them hang onto a pram, stroller, or your clothes.**
- Remember that your child learns by watching you so always use safe behaviour whilst in the car park or near roads.
- Never use your mobile phone or device whilst in the car park or around roads.
- Explain what you're doing as you do it. For example, "we have to stop now, I can hear a car. Let's wait and see where it's going". This will emphasise what you are doing and why.
- Encourage your child to help you watch and listen for cars.
- If you have a toddler and a baby, place the toddler in the car first (and get the toddler out last) as babies are not going to move away! Secure the baby in the capsule *and then* secure the toddler in the child restraint (emphasise to your toddler that they must sit still and be sensible in the car at all times).

- ‘Train’ your 3-5 year old to stand beside the car with a hand touching the door: They are less likely to get distracted and move if they are focusing on touching the car. However *do not* turn this into a game as a young child will delight in taking their hand away and jumping around to see if you’re watching.
- Whenever possible ensure your child/children enter and exit the car through the safety door (the rear passenger side door).
- Ensure your childproof door locks are activated. If you’re not sure how to do this look in your car’s manual.
- Never start your vehicle until everyone (including the driver) has their seat belts / child restraints fastened.
- Never allow your child to open the car door themselves. By opening the car door for them (whether getting in or out), you have more control as to where they are and what they are doing.
- Check thoroughly for anyone around the car before leaving the car spot. If another parent with children is exiting the building be patient and ensure they are safe before moving the car.
- If you are in a mini-van or 4WD and have a mirror at the rear of the car, ensure it is set up so that you are able to see anything directly behind the vehicle, and don’t forget to use it!
- Absolutely no double-parking and please do not park anyone in – be considerate of others.
- Park evenly and parallel within the marked lines in the car park.
- Never leave a child unattended in the vehicle, even if you can see them.
- Never leave the vehicle running while taking your child/children to or from the building.

Information adapted from:

Raising Children Network, Kids and Traffic, Kidsafe NSW