

Child Pedestrians: Factors Associated With Ability to Cross Roads Safely and Development of a Training Package



This November 2008 research report by Monash University in Sweden reveals interesting results and shows progress toward developing better skill-based pedestrian safety programs for young children. Traditionally, education programs for young children have focused more on knowledge and attitudes than the actual skills a child needs to be safe while operating in traffic. As a result, most traditional pedestrian safety programs have demonstrated limited knowledge and skill improvements.

Part of this research project involved developing and evaluating a training program for children age

6 to 10 which stressed how to select safe gaps in traffic to allow them to cross the road safely.

Randomly selected children were asked to respond to simulated road crossing environments involving a range of gap times and traffic speeds, by responding whether or not it was safe to cross the road.

The children were also given a battery of tests to assess their functional skills, and their parents were interviewed to assess information such as the child's physical activity levels and exposure to traffic and traffic education. The Executive Summary concludes:

The results suggest that children primarily use distance rather than the speed of approaching vehicles when making judgment about safe crossing gaps. The study further found that younger children are more likely to make incorrect gap assessments, but that it is important to let children walk independently as they mature and are able to make these assessments.

Age was a strong predictor of critically incorrect decisions, with six year olds almost 12 times more likely than ten year olds to make a critically incorrect decision. Children who walked independently more frequently were less likely to make incorrect crossing decisions compared with children who walk independently less frequently. This suggests that age-appropriate traffic exposure is beneficial for acquiring road skills.

The Executive Summary describes the detailed skills training course, which involved simulated cars and the children crossing simulated roadways, accompanied by feedback on their performance and later, distractions.

The Executive summary concludes:

The current findings suggest that tailored and practical programs have a beneficial effect on children's road-crossing decisions.

Children made 56% fewer critically incorrect responses immediately after training, and 47% fewer when re-tested one month later, which is an excellent retention rate. The authors plan to continue researching this topic and developing a more refined training course for child pedestrians.

[Click here](#) to read at least the Executive Summary (pages 11 - 15) or the full report: