

Pedestrian Safety

Main Points

- Emergency physicians treat thousands of patients each year who are injured by motor vehicles while walking.
- Sixty-eight thousand pedestrians were injured in traffic crashes in 2004. On average, a pedestrian is injured every 8 minutes in the United States.
- There were 4,641 pedestrians killed in traffic crashes in 2004 - a 15-percent decrease from the statistics reported in 1994 by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.
- Alcohol involvement - for driver or pedestrian - was reported in nearly half of all traffic crashes resulting in pedestrian deaths.
- Emergency physicians are patient advocates who are committed to preventing injuries.

Q. Who is at risk for pedestrian injury and death?

- A. More than two-thirds of pedestrians (69 percent) who died were males (NHTSA). Nearly one-fifth of children between ages 5 and 9 who died in traffic crashes were pedestrians (NHTSA). Older pedestrians (over age 70) account for 15 percent of all pedestrian fatalities and 6 percent of all pedestrian injuries (NHTSA).

Q. When do pedestrian deaths and injuries happen?

- A. Forty percent of all young (under the age of 16) pedestrian fatalities occurred between 3pm and 7pm. Pedestrian deaths are more likely to occur on Friday, Saturday, or Sunday than on other days; nearly half (49 percent) of all pedestrian fatalities occurred on these days.

Q. How often is alcohol involved in a pedestrian injury or death?

- A. Alcohol involvement, either by a driver or by a pedestrian, was reported in nearly half (47 percent) of traffic crashes that resulted in pedestrian fatalities in 2004. Of pedestrian fatalities, 36 percent were intoxicated (blood alcohol concentration of .08 grams per deciliter or higher). The alcohol involvement rate for the drivers involved was 16 percent. In 6 percent of accidents, both the driver and the pedestrian were intoxicated.

Q. How can pedestrian injury and death be prevented?

- A. To prevent injury and death, pedestrians should:

- Use sidewalks. Know and obey safety rules (e.g., if a "don't walk" signal starts blinking when you're halfway across an intersection, continue walking).
- Cross only at intersections and crosswalks.
- Look left, right, and left again for traffic before stepping off the curb.
- See and be seen.
- Closely watch children and teach them the safety rules.
- Use the "Walkability Checklist," available from NHTSA, which helps community members determine the safety of their neighborhood walkways and take actions to make them safer.
<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/ped/walk1.html>

Data for this fact sheet came from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the National Safe Kids Campaign and the U.S. Department of Transportation.