

# LOOK FOR CARS, NOT TWEETS.

## Stop, Look and Listen

### Getting Folks to Use Crosswalks and to put down Digital Devices When Crossing the Street

Pedestrian-Motor Vehicle crashes are a leading cause of injury and death across the lifespan. As a way to try to reduce injuries and deaths from these crashes, one can think of the triangle below of factors to address in developing means by which to reduce their frequency. This article will focus on pedestrian behavior such as jaywalking and its role in pedestrian-motor vehicle crashes.

(available at [http://www.popcenter.org/problems/pedestrian\\_injuries/](http://www.popcenter.org/problems/pedestrian_injuries/))

Pedestrian jaywalking is a behavior that can lead leads to pedestrian injuries and fatalities. Jaywalking is a general term for any form of illegal street-crossing by a pedestrian. There are several types of pedestrian behavior that can be considered jaywalking:

- Walking against a pedestrian walk signal (one must be aware that in New Haven, an exclusive walk phase occurs during the traffic cycle during which time all traffic stops so that pedestrians can cross from all 4 corners of the intersection)
- Crossing a street where there is no crosswalk (midblock crossing)
- Crossing a street outside of a marked crosswalk where one is present

An ongoing pedestrian mapping project being conducted by the Injury Prevention Center at Yale-New Haven Hospital has found that jaywalking may have played a role in the majority of pedestrian-motor vehicle crashes in which the pedestrian required medical evaluation at an Emergency Department.

### Pedestrian distraction

Pedestrians distracted by digital devices are at a higher risk of injury due to a reduced awareness of their surroundings as they cross streets.

Distracted walkers tend to have reduced awareness of their surroundings. More than half of all adult cell phone owners have been on the giving or receiving end of a distracted walking encounter where they have either bumped into by a distracted pedestrian or where they have physically bumped into another person or object because they were distracted by using their own cellphone. Research done by investigators at the Injury Prevention Center at Yale-New Hospital It has also been shown that pedestrians who are distracted by digital devices take longer to cross an intersection than those who are not.

### Crossing the Street Safely

Below are some tips for crossing safely:

- Just because the light is green doesn't mean it's safe to cross. Before you step off the curb, always check to the left, right and left again to make sure traffic has stopped.
- Never assume a driver sees you: always make eye contact with the driver so that the driver sees you and stops.

- Don't assume you're safe on a crosswalk: drivers do not always see pedestrians or stop for them on a crosswalk. Stay within the lines of the crosswalk and never walk behind a car that is blocking the crosswalk.
- Always obey walk/don't walk signs when crossing a crosswalk: even when the sign indicates it is safe to walk, always look both ways and look and listen as you cross, as the driver may not see you, may turn without looking for pedestrians or may run a traffic light illegally.
- Walk, don't run: running or darting into the street increases the danger that motorists will not see you or will not be able to stop in time.
- Do not use digital devices while walking, especially when crossing streets and intersections.

Kirsten Bechtel MD

Associate Professor of Pediatrics

Chair-University Traffic Safety Committee Yale School of Medicine

[kirsten.bechtel@yale.edu](mailto:kirsten.bechtel@yale.edu)

### New Haven Traffic Safety Hotline:

Visit: [trafficsafety@newhavenct.net](mailto:trafficsafety@newhavenct.net) or call 203-946-6956. . Anonymously report hazardous driving or other non-emergency traffic complaints.



## Safety is a Habit You Can Live With

Whether you run or walk at night, two things to remember are to “see and be seen.” You need to know where you’re going, what you’ll find there, and whether drivers can see you coming.

You can increase your safety by making yourself more visible and using safe routes and road crossings where possible. So be cautious and use the following tips for running at night.

- Run against traffic. It’s easier to avoid traffic if you can see it coming. Avoid busy roads and those with no shoulders or sidewalks.
- Be visible. If you’ run in the early morning or at night, wear light colored clothing. Also, make sure you have reflective gear on. Although some items -already have reflective pieces on them, it doesn’t hurt to add more. A headlamp is also a great item for runners who do a lot of early morning or evening runs.
- Run behind vehicles at intersections. If a car or truck has stopped at a stop sign, there’s no guarantee the driver has seen you.
- Ditch the ear phones. Make sure you leave your MP3 player, smartphone or iPod at home. You can’t hear -oncoming cars, cyclists yelling to move, dogs, or any other potential threat.
- Wear a billed cap and clear glasses. The bill of a cap will hit an unseen tree branch or another obstacle before the obstacle hits your head. Clear glasses will protect your eyes from bugs and other unseen obstacles.
- Vary your routes. A potential attacker can watch for runners’ patterns and loom in a particularly dark or isolated area. Don’t make yourself an easy target.
- Run with a partner. If possible, try to never run alone. If you’re running alone, let someone know the route you’re running and approximately how long you will be out.
- Try to make eye contact and acknowledge a driver. The interaction, however brief, could save your life.
- Always have identification on you. Put your driver’s license in your pocket or wear an ID tag on your shoe.
- Carry a cell phone. You’ll be able to contact police immediately if something happens to you or you notice anything out of the ordinary.
- Follow your instincts. If you feel that you’re entering an unsafe situation, trust your gut and run to a safety location.
- Watch out for bikes and runners. Always be aware of other runners and cyclists. Before you stop or turn around, make sure your path is clear.

**Stay alive by staying visible.** According to the [U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#), the hours between 6 P.M. and 9 P.M. are the most dangerous for pedestrians. Statistics show that ten percent of all on-road pedestrian fatalities happen because people are not visible to drivers.



## Rules of the Road



Distraction is a common cause of accidents on the roadway. And, while we all know that distraction is cause for vehicular accidents, there is another distracted road user, the pedestrian.

As a pedestrian, you are among the most vulnerable users of the road. So don’t let distraction be a factor while you’re on the roadways.

Current research suggests that cell phone using pedestrians walk slower through intersections, are less likely to look at traffic before crossing, and pay less attention to their surroundings.

Exercise caution at intersections and in crosswalks. Be aware of your surroundings by removing your earphones and stopping your cell phone use before entering the intersection. Be seen, be alert and be safe.



### EHS is all a-Twitter!

Let’s start a trend. Add [#LookForCarsNotTweets](#) to all of your posts about pedestrian safety. Join our safety campaign to keep our streets safe for all users.

**Office of Environmental Health & Safety**  
135 College Street, Suite 100, New Haven, CT 06510  
Telephone: 203-785-3550 / Fax: 203-785-7588  
<http://www.yale.edu/ehs>  
Director: Peter Reinhardt