

**AARP**<sup>SM</sup>



# Take a Walk!

AARP Driver Safety & Mobility Options

# Are you walking on the WILD SIDE?



Walking is the oldest and most basic form of travel. Walking is the second most used method of transportation. It is the primary way that people connect to other means of travel (e.g., driving, public transportation, etc.).

Millions of Americans walk everyday—whether to get to work, go to the store or doctor’s office, get an ice cream cone, or just for exercise and associated health benefits. Walking is both inexpensive and friendly to the environment. But “safety first” should always be the rule when walking.

AARP wants you to walk safely, so take this quiz to test your knowledge about staying safe!

# What is your walking IQ?

## Can YOU pass this safe walking quiz?

This quiz will test your knowledge of safe walking practices and give you some dos and don'ts on how to be a safer pedestrian.

Answers to questions on the next pages.

Check <b>True</b> or <b>False</b> for each statement.	True	False
1. All communities use pedestrian countdown signals at intersections.		
2. It is safer to walk in winter months.		
3. It is safe to cross the street between intersections.		
4. Walking in parking lots is safer than crossing streets.		
5. If you must walk on or near a roadway that <b>does not</b> have a sidewalk, you should walk facing oncoming traffic.		
6. When walking at night, you should always wear light-colored clothing.		
7. It is safer for pedestrians to walk after 6:00 p.m.		
8. Walking under the influence of alcohol contributes to pedestrian deaths.		
9. To prevent injuries, you need shoes designed specifically for walking, even for short trips.		
10. Older adults have a much higher number of deaths and injuries in pedestrian crashes.		

## Quiz Answers:

- 1. False:** Many communities do not have pedestrian countdown signals. Pedestrian signals come in many types and sizes, including countdown indicators to indicate the signal is going to change soon. Some pedestrian signals emit a sound to help guide pedestrians with visual impairments.  
Always use sidewalks and a marked crosswalk when one is available and learn how the signals in your community function. At intersections that have pedestrian signals, always obey the message on the signal. If the signal shows “DON'T WALK,” do not start crossing the street!
- 2. False:** While walking, regardless of the time of year, you should always dress to be seen! Although the temperature may be more comfortable for walking during some winter months, the lower angle of the sun and decreased number of daylight hours make it harder for drivers to see pedestrians. In addition, the presence of ice or snow may make walking more difficult.
- 3. False:** You should always cross a street at the corner/intersection or at a marked crosswalk. Drivers are less likely to be on the lookout for pedestrians between intersections and are more likely to be driving faster. Even at intersections, you should look in all directions before crossing. Look left-right-left. If no vehicles are approaching, begin crossing the street. At intersections, continue to look for traffic in all directions, especially for vehicles turning right on red. Drivers making this turn may be more focused on oncoming traffic and not be aware of pedestrians on their right.
- 4. False:** Parking lots pose many dangers to pedestrians because drivers may be distracted and have poor visibility. Use marked pedestrian paths in parking lots if they are available. Be aware of engine noise and vehicles with back-up lights activated. Be especially alert for cars that are occupied and running. If you are wearing headphones or an earpiece for your cell phone, you should remove them in parking lots and at intersections, so you can listen for approaching traffic.
- 5. True:** If there is no sidewalk, you need to use extra caution. Walk facing oncoming traffic so that you and all drivers can see each other. Before crossing the road, make sure that you make eye contact with the drivers so they see you and understand your intention to cross the road. PAUSE before you enter the roadway.



6. **True:** While wearing light-colored clothing may help, it may not provide enough contrast for a motorist to see you as you cross the street. Wearing a reflective wrist band, a reflective safety vest, or even carrying a flashlight allows drivers to see you better and reduces the risk of your being struck by a passing vehicle.
7. **False:** More than half of all pedestrian deaths occur after 6:00 p.m and before 6:00 a.m. In 2006, 69% of all pedestrian fatalities occurred at night.
8. **True:** About 33% of all pedestrians killed have a blood alcohol level above the legal limit. Alcohol and prescription drugs can affect the judgment and perception of both drivers and pedestrians. If you plan to walk, limit any alcohol consumption, especially in the evenings. You should also ask your doctor about any effects your medications might have on your vision, balance, or judgment.
9. **False:** All you need to begin walking is a comfortable pair of shoes. When walking for fitness, make sure you stretch and warm up properly before walking and remember to stay hydrated before, during, and after your walk, even on cooler days.
10. **True:** On average, a pedestrian is killed every 110 minutes and one pedestrian is injured every 9 minutes. In 2006, 4,784 pedestrians were killed and 61,000 pedestrians were injured in traffic crashes. Of those, adults age 70+ accounted for almost 15% (702 people) of pedestrian deaths. This is higher than any other age group and 7% (4,000 people) of all those injured.

## How did you do?

If you got all **10** answers correct, you know what it takes to be a safe pedestrian! You should be talking about pedestrian safety with family, friends, and neighbors!

If you got **6–9** answers correct, you are alert to your surroundings but need to pay more attention to being safe.

If you got **1–5** answers right, you need to focus on your own risk.

For more information, check out the resources listed on the last page of this booklet.

# How do they do that?

## Pedestrian signals

Pedestrian signals have one main function—to give pedestrians adequate time to cross busy intersections and roadways safely.

**Listen.** Have you heard a chirping noise as you get ready to cross the street? It could be a bird or it could be an audible pedestrian signal! Some pedestrian signals have annunciators (the chirping sound). This feature is designed to guide those who are visually impaired.

Pedestrian countdown signals consist of pedestrian images with standard shapes and color (e.g., white hand, red hand). Others may have an added display showing the number of seconds remaining to cross the street safely.

The countdown times should be based on average walking speed and the total crossing distance, but this is often not the case because many traffic engineers focus on moving vehicles rather than pedestrians. Older pedestrians and others with mobility impairments take more time to cross, so countdown signals should be set to accommodate these individuals' needs.

The countdown period usually starts with a white hand that indicates it is safe to start crossing. Next, a red flashing hand or flashing DON'T WALK sign indicates the amount of time remaining before oncoming traffic starts again. Lastly, a solid DON'T WALK or solid red hand indicates that there is no time left to cross the road safely.

Countdown pedestrian signals have several benefits:

- They are easily understood by all age groups.
- They increase safety.
- They help reduce the number of pedestrians stranded in the crosswalk when the light changes.
- They are well suited for wide crossings and areas with a large population of older adults.





## It takes a community!

In some communities, walking is not as safe an option as it should be. However, do not be discouraged! Here are some tips on how you can be more involved in helping your community become more pedestrian-friendly:

1. **RALLY** your neighbors to work with the appropriate local traffic/transportation officials and local government to add new walkways and sidewalks.
2. **CONTACT** your local public works department or elected community representative to report broken, cluttered, or otherwise unsafe sidewalks.
3. **ASK** city or county officials to install pedestrian and traffic signals, well-marked crosswalks, and traffic-calming devices. These help control the speed of traffic. Make sure the timing of traffic signals is long enough to accommodate older pedestrians, people with disabilities, and other slower-moving pedestrians.
4. **ORGANIZE** a Neighborhood Watch group to help deal with any criminal activity in your community. More vigilant neighborhood watching can result in less crime, which results in safer streets that everyone can enjoy.
5. **ADVOCATE** for raised medians with curb cuts to easily accommodate all pedestrians and wheelchair users.

## Resources

For more information on pedestrian safety, healthy walking, and improving your community, these resources will be helpful:

### Make Your Community Walkable

[www.aarp.org/health/healthyliving/articles/walking\\_3.html](http://www.aarp.org/health/healthyliving/articles/walking_3.html)

### National Center for Safe Routes to School's Walkability Checklist

<http://drusilla.hsrb.unc.edu/cms/downloads/walkabilitychecklist.pdf>

### Complete Streets Coalition

[www.completestreets.org](http://www.completestreets.org)

### Walk Wise, Drive Smart

[www.walk-wise.org](http://www.walk-wise.org)

### Pedestrian Safety Guide and Countermeasure Selection System

[www.walkinginfo.org/pedsafe](http://www.walkinginfo.org/pedsafe)

### Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Pedestrian Safety

[http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/PED\\_BIKE/ped/index.htm](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/PED_BIKE/ped/index.htm)

### National Center for Bicycling & Walking

[www.bikewalk.org](http://www.bikewalk.org)

### Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center

[www.pedbikeinfo.org](http://www.pedbikeinfo.org)

### Step Up to Better Health

[www.aarp.org/walking](http://www.aarp.org/walking)

This is AARP's free online walking program. Clip on a step counter, choose an Internet trail, and start walking. Track your steps along one of four famous virtual American trails—Lewis and Clark, Alaska Highway, Highway 50, or the Appalachian Trail.

### Stepping Out—Mature Adults: Be Healthy, Walk Safely

[www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/olddrive/SteppingOut](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/olddrive/SteppingOut)



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