

# Spring brings unfamiliar breed of foot-borne traveller: the pedestrian

*To prevent collisions, both walkers and drivers need to take precautions: follow rules of the road, watch for one another*

The recent warm weather has driven people out of their cars and onto the sidewalks, and the streets are alive with rollerbladers, dog walkers, and joggers.

These people are called “pedestrians.”

I know you may find them hard to recognize; since the winter months sent the vast majority scurrying for cover, you probably haven’t had seen many.

Here’s a refresher: these are people who stand patiently at uncontrolled crosswalks, or dutifully wait for the walking man to appear on the pedestrian signal before giving you a quick wave and trotting briskly across the street.

That is, that’s what some of them look like.

Others can be spotted wandering across unmarked crossings or merge lanes, blissfully unaware that they are endangering themselves and everyone else on the road. Others seem to snap out of some dream-like state precisely as the “don’t walk” signal pops up,



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prompting them to sprint across the road just as traffic moves ahead.

Pedestrians are road users, just like drivers; that means some are responsible, and some shouldn’t be allowed to leave the yard.

## **Big losers**

Pedestrians have many similarities to drivers, but with one significant difference: pedestrians lose if they’re involved in a motor vehicle accident. No seat belt, no air bag, nothing. Just body meets bumper.

Although pedestrian collisions account for only two per cent of all motor vehicle crashes, they represent 12 per cent of all vehicle-related

fatalities. In Manitoba about 15 people are killed and another 675 sustain what are often life-changing injuries every year.

You may be surprised that more than half of these accidents occurred between noon and 6 p.m.

Looks like we need to pay a little more attention to each other out there.

## **Here’s how:**

### *Walkers*

- Always watch for turning vehicles. Having had the legal right to cross won’t make you feel any better in Emergency.
- Cross only at intersections whenever possible, preferably at those controlled by signs or traffic control signs. And hurry up.
- Before stepping off the curb, make sure that all vehicles have stopped for you and that all drivers see you. Don’t step out until you make eye contact, and that means checking lane by lane as you cross.

- Do everything possible to increase your chances of seeing and being seen by drivers at night. Flashlights, reflective clothing or tape and bright coloured clothing make a big difference.

### *Drivers*

- Slow down in residential neighbourhoods; kids can come from nowhere.
- When making a left or right turn, give way to pedestrians crossing the road. They have right of way, you don’t.
- Pay attention; the driver slowing ahead for “no reason” could be reacting to a pedestrian
- Never pass a vehicle stopped at a crosswalk.

Seniors are particularly at risk, as they can experience physical changes that affect how they cross streets, including decreased mobility and reaction time, hearing loss, and declining vision.

Be especially aware of children, too. A child’s field of vision is 1/3 narrower than an adult’s and they sometimes can’t determine the direction of sounds. They don’t see the car, and they don’t hear it coming. Smaller children often believe headlights are “eyes” and the car can “see.” They overestimate their own abilities, are easily distracted, and are prone to sudden movement.

Again, as is normally the case, common sense and courtesy go a long way in making sure everyone gets where they want to go. Summer’s coming, which means more pedestrian and vehicle traffic. Let’s try to get along.

Until next week, be **RoadWise**.

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