

2 Seat Belts &
Bus Safety

3 Pedestrian &
Bicycle Safety

4 Stock an
Emergency Kit

THE NORTH COUNTRY HEALTH EFFECT

A health & safety guide brought to you by the Clinton County Health Department.



Traffic safety

One of the safest choices drivers and passengers can make is to buckle up. Of the 23,824 vehicle passengers killed in 2020, 51% were not wearing seat belts.

Seat belts are the best defense against impaired, aggressive, and distracted drivers. Buckling up during a crash helps keep you safe and secure inside your vehicle; being completely ejected from a vehicle is almost always deadly.

Air bags are designed to work with seat belts, not replace them. If you don't wear your seat belt, you could be thrown into a rapidly opening frontal air bag. The force can seriously injure or even kill you.

Buckle up safely

- The lap belt and shoulder belt should be secured across the pelvis and rib cage. They are better able to withstand crash forces than other parts of your body.
- Place the shoulder belt across the middle of your chest and away from your neck.
- The lap belt rests across your hips, not your stomach.
- NEVER put the shoulder belt behind your back or under an arm.

Fitting a child in a seat belt

For your child to properly fit in a seat belt, they must be tall enough to sit without slouching and be able to:

1. Keep their back against the vehicle seat.
2. Keep their knees naturally bent over the edge of the vehicle seat.
3. Keep their feet flat on the floor.

Additionally:

- The lap belt must lie snugly across the upper thighs, not the stomach.
- The shoulder belt should lie snug across the shoulder and chest, and not cross the neck or face. Never let a child put the shoulder belt under an arm or behind the back. It could cause severe injuries in a crash.
- **Keep your child in the back seat**, it is safer there.
- Always check your child's belt fit in every vehicle.



School bus safety

The school bus is the safest vehicle on the road—your child is much safer taking a bus to and from school than traveling by car. Safety standards for school buses are above and beyond those for regular buses. Help your children stay safe by teaching them these school bus safety tips:

- Get to the bus stop early.
- Stay on the sidewalk while you wait for the bus.
- Step back from the road when the school bus approaches the bus stop.
- Use the handrail when getting on and off the school bus.
- Take a seat as quickly as possible and put your belongings under the seat.
- Wait until the school bus comes to a complete stop before getting off.
- Always cross in front of a stopped school bus, but only after making eye contact with the driver.

In the United States, the number of traffic crashes involving a bicyclist or pedestrian has been increasing since 2009. In 2017, there were 5,977 pedestrians and 783 bicyclists killed in motor vehicle crashes. **Drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists all play a role in traffic safety.**

Safe riding tips

- **Wear a bicycle helmet.** Everyone – at every age – should wear bicycle helmets.
- **Adjust your bicycle to fit.**
- **Check your equipment.** Before riding, inflate tires properly and check that the brakes work.
- **See and be seen.** Wear neon, fluorescent or other bright colors when riding, to be most easily seen. Wear something that reflects light, such as reflective tape or markings, or flashing lights.
- **Control the bicycle.** Ride with two hands on the handlebars, except when signaling a turn.
- **Watch for and avoid road hazards.**
- **Use verbal and non-verbal communication.** This includes eye contact with drivers, turn signals, pointing to road hazards for bicyclists behind you, and stating “passing on your left” or “on your left.”
- **Avoid riding at night.** Use reflectors on the front and rear of your bicycle.

Rules of the road

1. **Go with the traffic flow.** Ride right, walk left.
2. **Obey all traffic laws.** A bicycle is a vehicle and you are the driver.
3. **Yield to traffic.** Almost always, the driver on a smaller road must yield to traffic on a larger road.
4. **Be predictable.** Ride in a straight line.
5. **Stay alert at all times.**
6. **Look before turning.** Always look left, right, and behind you and signal before turning.
7. **Watch for parked cars.**

Pedestrian safety

Walking safety tips

- Follow the rules of the road and obey signs and signals.
- Walk on sidewalks whenever they are available. If there is no sidewalk, walk facing traffic and as far from traffic as possible.
- Cross streets at crosswalks or intersections. Look for cars in all directions, including those turning left or right. If a crosswalk or intersection is not available, locate a well-lit area where you have the best view of traffic. Wait for a gap in traffic that allows enough time to cross safely; continue watching for traffic as you cross.
- Watch for cars entering or exiting driveways, or backing up in parking lots.

Safety tips for drivers

- Look out for pedestrians and riders everywhere, at all times.
- Slow down and be prepared to stop when turning or otherwise entering a crosswalk.
- Yield to pedestrians in crosswalks and stop well back from the crosswalk to give other vehicles an opportunity to see the crossing pedestrians so they can stop too.
- Never pass vehicles stopped at a crosswalk. There may be people crossing where you can't see.
- Be extra cautious when backing up and look for pedestrians.



Stock the car

Keep a well stocked emergency kit in your car. Include the following items:

- **Basic kit items:** blanket, coat, food, hats/mittens, and water.
- **Safety items:** batteries, cell phone, compass, first aid kit, flashlight, maps, pocket knife/utility tool, and a radio.
- **In case you get stuck:** chains/rope, compressed air, hazard flags/flares, ice scraper, jumper cables, road salt/cat litter/sand, and a shovel.

For more health & safety tips, visit
<https://health.clintoncountyny.gov/nchealtheffect>
or scan the QR code.



Information in this guide was adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, www.cdc.gov); the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH, www.health.ny.gov); The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA, www.nhtsa.gov); and the American Red Cross (www.redcross.org).

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