Our community recently added some sidewalks around the school to make walking to the school easier for students and other community members too. While the weather is nice, it is a great time to get up and get moving. But walking safely is important to having an enjoyable and healthy time. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “In 2010, 4,280 pedestrians were killed in traffic crashes in the United States, and another 70,000 pedestrians were injured,” so safety is key.

First where there are sidewalks use them (or walk on a track, trail, mall hall, store aisle or other area off the street). This keeps walkers away from the flow of traffic. Likewise, if there is not a sidewalk keep as far to the side of the road as possible; or better yet, off it if possible. When walking, be aware of and careful of the movement of vehicles and face traffic so as to see what may be coming. Beware of strangers and keep in mind that not all animals are friendly.

Here are some other safety tips for walkers.

- Wear light colored, reflective clothing and shoes to be as visible as possible, especially at night.
- Walk in pairs or groups. While enjoying the company, the encouragement and the “strength in numbers,” be sure to stay alert to traffic movement and other things that may be happening around you.
- Look both ways before crossing a street. In fact, look left, look right and then look left again before stepping out to make sure the near lane is still clear. And cross at a corner or designated crosswalk.
- Consider what the weather will be when you will be walking. Wear light weight, light colored, loose fitting clothing in hot weather. You may want to bring water along, if the walk will be very long. And in very hot weather, choose a cooler morning or evening time to walk to avoid overheating. On colder days, dress warmly enough to stay warm but use layers to be able to get comfortable as you warm up with the exertion of walking. Be alert to pending storms and choose a time when thunderstorms are not as likely. If you find yourself out in a thunderstorm, take shelter immediately.
- Walking can be a great way to get in the physical activity needed to stay healthy. And the bonus is that it can be inexpensive, fun and relaxing besides.

For more information on walking safety or any other topic, contact me, Janet Hackert, at 660-425-6434 or HackertJ@missouri.edu or your local University of Missouri Extension office.