

## 'Keep kids safer on roads'

PETALING JAYA: Each year, 500 children die in road accidents, and parents only have themselves to blame, say researchers.

With the coming holiday period, Safe Kids Malaysia's executive director Assoc Prof Dr Kulanthayan K.C. Mani is hoping parents will change for the better by being proactive in adopting safer practices.

"The most promising intervention that works in any country is speed control. If you reduce speed then you get two benefits.

"When the speed is low, you're able to control your vehicle and avoid a crash. Even if a crash happens, the impact of the crash is at a low level. What could have been a fatality is now an injury.

"If we can invest in speed control, that is the biggest return we can get," said Kulanthayan.

The United States-based Safe Kids ([www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org)) is an organisation dedicated to preventing child injuries and deaths from accidents.

Kulanthayan also emphasised on raising awareness of those on two-wheelers.

For the older teens who might be on bicycles or even motorcycles, he suggested that they at least wear reflective vests or brightly-coloured clothing.

While child restraints in a vehicle are important, where they are seated also matters as it can significantly affect chances of survival in an accident, he said.

Kulanthayan argued that far more dangerous objects are in a child's way when he or she is seated in the front passenger seat, compared to being seated at the rear.

"You look at the VIPs - they always sit behind the driver because it is the safest spot in the car.

"The only thing in front of you is the back of the driver seat, which is softer than the dashboard and the front windscreen," he said.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 186,300 children die every year from traffic-related accidents.

In May, WHO published Ten Strategies For Keeping Children Safe On The Road in conjunction with the third United Nations Road Safety Week, which was held globally from May 4 to May 10.

With the report, Kulanthayan hopes more parents would change to become more proactive when addressing safety issues, even when not prescribed by law.

"If it's safer, why wait for the law?" he asked.

The 10 strategies on reducing accidents can be found at [who.int/roadsafety/week/2015/en/](http://who.int/roadsafety/week/2015/en/).