

Bike Helmet Safety

Kids are at high risk for bicycle-related injuries simply because more than 70 percent of 5- to 14-year-olds ride bicycles. This age group rides about 50 percent more than the average bicyclist so is much more likely to encounter accidental injury.

Each year approximately 140 children are killed as bicyclists in the United States. Children sustain more than 275,000 nonfatal bicycle injuries each year, some of them life-altering.

Head injury is the leading cause of death in bicycle crashes and is the most important determinant of death and permanent disability. The most important organ in the body, the brain, is also one of the most fragile. Even a mild jolt to the head can result in bruising of the brain and tearing of nerves and blood vessels.

The National Center for Injury Prevention estimates that helmets can reduce the risk of head injury by 85 percent, but only 15 to 25 percent of children wear helmets while riding a bike. The rate is the lowest among children ages 11 to 14.



Helmet tips:

- **Don't negotiate.** Require your children to wear a helmet every time, everywhere they go. Enforce this rule.
- **Be a role model.** Always wear a helmet when you ride a bike.
- **Talk to other parents** and encourage them to have their kids wear helmets.
- **Have your child help choose his/her helmet.** Helmets come in many styles and colors. When a child chooses a helmet they think is “cool”, they may be less likely to take it off when you aren't around.
- Buy a **helmet that meets or exceeds safety standards** developed by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. They will have an ASTM, Snell, ANSI or CPSC certification sticker inside or on the box.
- Help your child to understand the importance of protecting the head from injury.
- **Praise** your child and others for wearing their helmets.
- Help your child's school establish and support the rule: “If you ride your bike to school, you must wear a helmet.”
- **Correct fit is essential.** Do the “Eyes, Ears and Mouth” check:
 - **Eyes:** Position the helmet on your head. Look up and you should see the rim of the helmet (one to two fingers above the eyebrows).

(continued on reverse)



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- **Ears:** Make sure the helmet's straps form a "V" under your ears when buckled. The strap should be snug, but comfortable.
- **Mouth:** Open your mouth as wide as you can. If the helmet doesn't hug your head tighten those straps! It should be level on the head and should not move more than an inch in any direction.

Purchasing a helmet:

- Choose a smooth rounded outer shell, with no sharp ribs or snag points. Beware of gimmicks.
- White or bright colors are easier for drivers of vehicles to see.
- Coolness, ventilation, fit and sweat control are the most critical comfort needs.
- Ponytail ports can improve fit for those with long hair.
- Buy a helmet that meets or exceeds safety standards developed by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. They will have an ASTM, Snell, ANSI or CPSC certification sticker inside or on the box.
- Some head shapes require more fiddling with fitting pads and straps, but good fit is essential for safety.
- Replace your helmet after a crash.
- Warning! No helmets on playgrounds!
 - Children must remove helmets before climbing on playground equipment or trees, where a helmet can snag and choke them.



Remember: wearing a helmet isn't just for bike riding. Children who skateboard, rollerblade, ride scooters or ATV vehicles should also wear a helmet designed for those activities.

Sources: Safe Kids Worldwide (SKW). Bicycle, Rollerblade and Skateboard Injuries. Washington (DC): SKW, 2007. Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute, Arlington, VA., 2006.



Kohl's Safety Seconds offers practical safety information about common child safety concerns. Kohl's Safety Seconds are produced through a partnership between Aspirus Wausau Hospital and Kohl's Department Stores, working together to keep children safe.

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