

# Bicycle Safety

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Riding on busier streets demands greater skills to avoid collisions. If children develop safe cycling skills and learn to follow the rules of the road, many collisions can be avoided. Some accidents, however, happen through no fault of the cyclist, so children must be taught to ride defensively and to wear a bicycle helmet.

## *SOME QUICK FACTS & FIGURES:*

- ✚ 600 children are killed each year in bicycle related accidents
- ✚ 60% of childrens injuries occur on minor roads—usually within one (1) mile of home
- ✚ 40% of bicycle injury deaths in children are a result of severe head injuries
- ✚ 85% of all head or brain injuries could have been avoided if cyclists wore bike helmets

## *CHILD BIKE CARRIERS:*

Having a child ride in a carrier increases the risk of injury. A child makes the bike unstable and can increase braking time. To help decrease the risk of injury:

- ✚ Be an experienced cyclist if riding with a child
- ✚ Only ride on bike paths or quiet streets. Ride with caution at slower speeds
- ✚ Avoid busy streets and bad weather
- ✚ Never carry an infant in your arms or in a front or backpack holder
- ✚ Make sure the child has strong enough neck muscles and can sit unsupported
- ✚ Both child and adult should wear an approved bicycle helmet
- ✚ Attach rear-mounted seats over the rear wheel. Have spoke guards, a high back, sturdy shoulder harness, and a lap belt that will support a sleeping child
- ✚ Follow all manufacturer's instructions and guidelines

## *HELMET GUIDELINES:*

- ✚ Buy a helmet that fits your child correctly and make sure it is always worn properly
- ✚ Set a good example. Always wear a helmet yourself
- ✚ Price does not necessarily suggest safety. Check for approved safety standard stickers.
- ✚ A molded shell has the best construction.
- ✚ The helmet should be worn securely and squarely with the front edge resting less than 1" above eyebrows. It should not go above the forehead. The chin strap should be tight, centered, and always fastened.
- ✚ Make sure that no more than three (3) fingers can fit between the chin & helmet strap.
- ✚ Buy a helmet with bright colors or reflective stripes to be easily seen.
- ✚ Never use a cracked helmet or one that has been in an accident

## *10 REASONS YOUNG CHILDREN ARE ESPECIALLY AT RISK:*

- ✚ Young children are especially at risk in traffic situations because they:
- ✚ Expect others to look out for them.
- ✚ Have no understanding of complicated traffic situations.
- ✚ Overestimate their knowledge and physical strength.
- ✚ Focus on one thought at a time.
- ✚ Assume that if they can see someone, they can also be seen.
- ✚ Think vehicles can stop instantly
- ✚ Have difficulty estimating the speed a vehicle is traveling
- ✚ Have a field of vision one third narrower than adults have.
- ✚ Have difficulty determining the direction of sounds
- ✚ Do not have the experience or judgment needed to ride at night

### *EARLY CYCLING SKILLS:*

Exploring the world beyond their own neighborhood gives children a sense of independence.

Never pressure children to ride a two-wheeled bike, consider children's coordination and desire to learn to ride. Children develop at different rates, but most children can graduate from tricycles to training wheels between the ages of four (4) and six (6).

Children under the age of ten (10) usually have not developed the skills to ride with traffic and should not ride on the street.

- ✚ Make sure you and your children wear approved helmets.
- ✚ Children under seven (7) should only ride with adult supervision
- ✚ Children age eight (8) and nine (9) may be allowed to ride unsupervised but not in the street
- ✚ Unless you are riding with them, never allow children to bike in or around traffic.

Children over the age of ten (10) may ride on their own with proper training, but may need to be restricted to certain streets.

- ✚ Explain that a bicycle is a vehicle and must obey all traffic signs and rules.
- ✚ Street riding should depend on traffic, maturity, adequate knowledge, and ability to follow the rules of the road.
- ✚ Bicycle or walk all routes with your children to identify, safe routes for bicycling between home and school, etc.

### *CHOOSING A SAFE BICYCLE:*

When choosing a safe bicycle for your child consider the following points:

- ✚ Look for a bike that is simple, safe, sturdy, and durable. Most children do not appreciate or use gears, hand brakes, and other features until age 9.
- ✚ Consult experts who can help choose a bike children can control but will not outgrow quickly. Children may lose control and be injured on a bicycle that is the wrong size.

- ✚ Buy training wheels that are made with strong steel and thick rubber NOT thin metal and plastic.
- ✚ Make sure fender edges are rolled over or coated to avoid cutting legs and fingers.
- ✚ Choose a bike with a chain guard and avoid wearing loose pant legs when riding.
- ✚ Choose a bike with knobby, grippy pedals to keep feet safe
- ✚ Note the make, model and the serial number of your child's bike. If the bicycle is lost or stolen, having that information might make it easier to get it back.



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