
I N S I G H T S

FOR FAMILIES



Bicycle safety



❖ INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Adapted by Judy McDaniel, communications consultant, from www.kid-shealth.org.

Bike riding is a lot of fun, but accidents happen. Every year, about 300,000 kids go to the emergency department because of bike injuries. Some of these injuries are so serious that children die, usually from head injuries.

A head injury can mean brain injury. That's why it's so important for children to **wear a bike helmet**. Wearing helmets doesn't mean they can be reckless, but helmets will provide some protection for their heads and brains in case they fall down.

Bike helmets are so important that the U.S. government has created safety standards for them. A safe helmet should have a sticker that says it meets standards set by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).

Your children's bike helmets should fit them properly. You don't want them too small or too big.

Other helmet tips for you and your children:

- ❖ Never wear a hat under a bike helmet.
- ❖ A helmet should be worn level and cover the forehead. Don't tip it back so the forehead is showing.
- ❖ **The straps should always be fastened.** If the straps are flying, it's likely to fall off your head when you need it most.
- ❖ Make sure the straps are adjusted so they're snug enough that the helmet can't be pulled or twisted.
- ❖ Take care of a bike helmet and don't throw it around. That could damage the helmet and it won't provide the protection needed.
- ❖ After a crash, get a new helmet.
- ❖ Many bike helmets today are lightweight and come in cool colors. Reflective stickers are a great way for your children to personalize their helmets because they look cool and make your children more visible to people driving cars.

Helmet on, now what?

- ❖ Make sure your children have bicycles that are the right size for them. When they are on their bicycles, have each child stand straddling the top bar of his or her bike so that both feet are flat on the ground. There should be 1 to 3 inches (2.5 to 7.6 centimeters) of space between the child and the top bar.
- ❖ Make sure their bike seats, handlebars, and wheels fit tightly.
- ❖ Check and oil bike chains regularly.
- ❖ Check brakes to be sure they work well and aren't sticking.
- ❖ Check tires to make sure they have enough air and the right amount of tire pressure.

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Be seen, be safe!

- ❖ Wearing bright clothes and putting reflectors on their bikes can help your children stay safe.
- ❖ Make sure nothing gets caught in the bike chains.
- ❖ Wear the right shoes, such as sneakers, and never go riding barefoot.
- ❖ Avoid wearing headphones because the music can distract a rider from noises such as a car blowing its horn.

Where to ride

- ❖ No matter where your children ride, they need to keep an eye out for cars and trucks. Even if they're just riding on sidewalks, a car may pull out of a driveway into the bike path.
- ❖ When crossing busy roads, it's best to walk a bike across the street.
- ❖ A bike path free of cars is a great choice if there's one in your area. Just remind your children to share the path with the other riders, walkers, and strollers who also might be using it.
- ❖ And if your children are going on a long ride, have them take some water along.

Road rules

- ❖ If your children are allowed to ride on the street, teach them to follow these road rules:
 - Always ride with hands on the handlebars.
 - Always stop and check for traffic in both directions when leaving a driveway, an alley, or a curb.
 - Cross at intersections. When pulling out between parked cars, drivers can't see you coming.
 - Walk bikes across busy intersections using the crosswalk and following traffic signals.
 - Ride on the right-hand side of the street. Travel in the same direction as cars do. **Never** ride against traffic.
 - Use bike lanes or designated bike routes wherever possible.
 - Don't ride too close to parked cars. Doors can open suddenly.
 - Stop at all stop signs and obey street (red) lights just as cars do.
 - Ride single file on the street when riding with friends.
 - When passing other bikers or people on the street, always pass to their left side, and call out "On your left."