

Practicing Bike Safety

Your Guide to Enjoying the Ride



Cycling is fun for the entire family, but both parents and children need to be properly equipped when riding. According to Safe Kids USA and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, children sustain more than 275,000 nonfatal bicycle injuries annually. In addition, nearly 140 children are killed every year while riding their bikes and nearly 690 children are injured every day from bike-related crashes.

Be Safe, Be Seen

- Wear bright-colored clothing and add reflectors to bikes. This will help motorists notice you and your family.
- Regularly check bike chains. Loose pant legs, long backpack straps and shoelaces can get caught.
- Wear the appropriate gear. Sneakers help grip the pedals and riding gloves can help grip the handlebars. Avoid flip-flops, shoes with heels and cleats.
- Never ride barefoot.
- Avoid wearing headphones while bike riding. Music can distract you and make it difficult to hear noises on the road, like a car honking its horn.

Where to Ride

- Talk with your children about where to ride and how far to ride. Children younger than 10 years old should ride on sidewalks and avoid streets.
- Keep an eye out for cars and trucks. Even when riding on the sidewalk, a car could back out of the driveway and into the path of a bike.
- Encourage children to walk their bikes across the road if it is busy.
- Remember, a designated bike path is a great place to ride, if there is one in your area. Share the path with other riders, walkers and strollers. If you are going on a long bike ride, bring water.

Common Obstacles

- Wet leaves
- Big puddles
- Changes in road surface
- Storm grates
- Gravel or rocks
- Curbs
- Other riders

Facts About Helmets

According to Safe Kids USA and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission:

- Only about 20 percent of kids wear their helmets.
- Children are more likely to wear a helmet if their parents do.
- An estimated 75 percent of fatal head injuries that occur every year could have been prevented with a bicycle helmet.
- Helmets reduce the risk of brain injury by nearly 90 percent.

Fitting a Helmet

- **Size:** The helmet should fit snugly. If the helmet has a dial, tighten it for a more secure fit.
- **Position:** The helmet should sit level on your head.
- **Buckles:** Center the left buckle under the chin. On most helmets, the straps can be pulled from the back of the helmet to lengthen or shorten the chin strap.
- **Side straps:** Adjust the slider on both straps to form a "V" shape under, and slightly in front of, the ears. Lock the slider if possible.
- **Chin strap:** Buckle the chin strap. Tighten the strap until it is snug, so that no more than one or two fingers fit under the strap.
- **Final fitting:** Ask your child to open his or her mouth wide to check if the helmet fits correctly. The helmet should pull down on the head.

Contact Us

For more information, or to set up an appointment to purchase a helmet for your child, contact Helen DeVos Children's Hospital Injury Prevention Program at **616.391.SAFE** (7233) or visit helendevoschildrens.org/injuryprevention.