

Why is bicycle safety so important?

- Each year, more than 500,000 people go to the emergency room for bicycle injuries. More than 700 people die from those injuries.
- Children 15 years and younger are the biggest risk.
- Bicycle injuries and deaths cost \$8 billion each year.

How do I choose a safe bicycle for my child?

- Children can ride a 2-wheeled bicycle around 5 to 6 years old. Do not push your child if he is not ready.
- Use a bicycle that is the right size. Do not buy one that he will "grow into."
- A bicycle that is too big or too small can be very dangerous. Your child could lose control and crash.
- Take your child with you when buying a bicycle. This way you can make sure the bicycle is the right size.
- For a bicycle to be the right size, your child should be able to:
 - Place the balls of both feet on the ground while sitting on the seat with both hands on the handlebars.
 - Place both feet flat on the ground when straddling the center bar. Have him stand straight up with the bicycle upright between his legs. There should be at least 1-inch between his crotch and the bar.
 - Easily grasp the hand brakes and squeeze them to stop the bicycle. Bicycles with hand brakes should only be for older children. If your child is young and has not ridden a bicycle very long, buy a bicycle with coaster brakes. Coaster brakes work when your child pedals backwards. They are a lot easier to use.

How can I make my child's bicycle safer?

- Make sure your child's bicycle is the right size.
- Check the bicycle often. Tighten the seat and handlebars. Make sure the wheels are straight and screwed on tightly.
- Oil the chain regularly.
- Before every ride, check to see the brakes are working properly.
- Make sure the tires are pumped up properly.
- Put reflectors on the bicycle so that others can see you. Place a 3-inch wide red reflector behind the seat. Place a white reflector across the handlebars. You can also place reflectors on the spokes of each wheel.
- Attach a basket to the handlebars or a rack over the back tire to help carry things. This way your child will not have to hold anything while riding the bicycle.

How do I choose a safe helmet for my child?

- **Always wear a helmet when riding a bicycle.**
- Only buy a helmet that has been approved by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) or the Snell Organization. Turn the helmet over and look inside for one of these safety organization's stickers.
- Most helmets need to be replaced every 3 to 5 years. This is the "shelf-life" of the helmet.
- Bring your child with you when you are buying him a helmet. This way you can make sure it is the right size. The store clerk can help you.
- A helmet that fits your child should be:
 - Snug - The helmet should not be able to move front-to-back, or side-to-side. When the chinstrap is fastened, you should only be able to place one finger between the chinstrap and your child's chin.
 - Level - The helmet should lie square on top of your child's head. It should cover the top of his forehead. It should not tilt in any direction. Do not wear a baseball cap or any other hat under it.



- Stable - When the chinstrap is fastened, the helmet should not move in any direction. If the chinstrap or buckle is damaged, fix it immediately. Otherwise your helmet could fly off in an accident.
- If your child is in a bicycle accident and hits his head on a hard surface, you should buy him a new helmet. A helmet does not work as it should after hitting a hard surface. Even if it does not look damaged, it should be thrown away.

What should my child wear while riding a bicycle?

- Do not wear pants that are loose around the leg and ankle. The pant legs could get caught in the chain. If you are wearing loose pants, roll the pant legs up or tuck them in your socks.
- It is best not to carry anything while riding your bicycle. If you have to carry something like a backpack, it is safest to put it in a basket or rack that has been attached to the bicycle. Make sure the straps do not hang down.
- Wear bright colored clothing. Other people can easily see you if you have bright-colored clothes on.
- Wear light clothing. This is important during the summer so that you do not get over-heated. Drink plenty of water.
- Wear riding gloves. They can protect your hands if you fall off the bicycle. They can also protect your hands if you are riding your bicycle off-road.
- Think about buying a brightly-colored reflector to wear over clothing.

What safety tips should I teach my child?

- Always look both ways when leaving your driveway, allies, street corners, and turning directions.
- Always ride on the right-hand side of the road. Go in the same direction as the traffic.
- Always walk your bicycle across the crosswalk at busy intersections.
- Always wear a helmet.
- Always watch where you are riding. Stay away from dangers like wet leaves, rocks, cracks, potholes, railroad tracks, drainage grates, etc.
- Do not ride too close to parked cars. The car doors could open suddenly.
- Do not play in the road.
- Never have two people ride on the same bicycle. Never let anyone ride on the front handlebars or the back of your seat. Most bicycles are made for only one person.
- Never ride at night.
- Never ride on the sidewalk.
- Never wear headphones and listen to music while riding. You must be able to hear what is going on around you.
- Stop at all stop signs. Stop at all red lights. Obey all traffic signals.
- Use bicycle lanes if possible.
- If riding with friends, ride one behind the other in single file.
- Use hand signals when turning or stopping.
 - Left turn - Look behind you. Look to your right and left. Hold your left arm out straight. Turn slowly.



- Right turn - Look behind you. Look to your right and left. Hold your right arm out straight. Turn slowly.



- Right turn (alternative) - Look behind you. Look to your right and left. Hold your left arm up in an "L" shape. Turn slowly.
- Stop - Look behind you. Look both ways. Hold your left arm down in an "L" shape. Stop.



Quick Answers

- Bicycle safety is so important.
- Each year, more than 500,000 people go to the emergency room for bicycle injuries. More than 700 people die from those injuries.
- Make sure your child's bicycle is the right size.
- **Always wear a helmet when riding a bicycle.**
- Only buy a helmet that has been approved by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) or the Snell Organization.
- Make sure the helmet is the right size for your child. The store clerk can help you.
- Use hand signals when riding your bicycle.
- Always ride on the right-hand side of the road.
- Be careful!
- Call your doctor or local public health department if you have any questions about bicycle safety.

References

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