Helmet Safety

No matter what your age or level of experience, whenever you ride a bike or scooter, skateboard, horse, snowmobile, ATV/UTV, ski, snowboard, or engage in other activities during which your head is vulnerable to injury, you should always wear a helmet. In fact, many states have laws that require helmet use.

Why Helmets Should Be Worn

Cuts, bruises, and even broken bones will heal, but damage to your brain can be permanent. Even a low-speed fall can result in serious head injury. Many such disabling injuries can be prevented by wearing a helmet.

How Helmets Protect You

When you are wearing a helmet during a fall or crash, the force of impact is distributed over the surface of the helmet, rather than concentrated on the head. In addition, the thick plastic foam inside the hard outer shell of a helmet provides protection that cushions the blow. You should always purchase a new helmet after a significant crash. Even if the helmet appears fine, the interior may be damaged.

Choosing a Helmet

Discount department stores, sporting goods stores, and bicycle shops offer many models of helmets that are typically priced around $20 and up. Be sure to choose a helmet that meets the standards of the Consumer Product Safety Commission or the Snell Memorial Foundation. These standards have been raised, so if you have an old helmet, it may be time to get a new one.

Take some time trying on helmets and choose one with the right size and fit. According to the Snell Memorial Foundation, you should try a helmet on for 5 to 10 minutes to ensure proper fit. A helmet should be:

- **Snug.** It does not slide from side-to-side or front-to-back.
- **Level.** It is square on top of your head, covering the top of the forehead. It does not tilt in any direction.
- **Stable.** The chinstrap keeps the helmet from rocking in any direction. Chinstraps should be replaced if any part of the buckle breaks. Otherwise, a helmet may fly off in an accident.

It's also important to choose the right type of helmet for the activity you are doing. Each type of helmet is designed to protect you from the impacts you are more likely to experience during a specific sport or activity. Wearing the wrong helmet may mean your head and brain are not properly protected if you fall or crash, making it more likely that you will suffer an injury.

Many bike helmets are ventilated, lightweight, and come in a variety of colors. Choose a helmet that motorists will see.

Children and Helmets

Young children are particularly vulnerable to head injuries because they have proportionally larger heads and higher centers of gravity, and their coordination is not fully developed. It is more difficult for children to avoid obstacles when biking, sledding, in-line skating, skiing, or doing other activities.

Children 5 to 14 years of age have the highest injury rate of all bicycle riders, and bike accidents are a leading cause of death for children.

When buying a helmet for your child, be sure to choose a helmet that fits your child now, not one to grow into. Likewise, be sure to purchase a new helmet if the one you are currently using becomes too small for your growing child.

Tips to help children understand the importance of wearing helmets:

- Teach by example. Adults should always wear helmets when doing activities that have potential for collision.
- Be aware that your child is more likely to wear a helmet if they like the way it looks.

Bike helmets save lives and prevent injuries, but in a few situations, they are not appropriate:

- Children should not wear helmets when they climb trees or play on playground equipment. A helmet may get stuck on a tree or piece of equipment and strangle a child.
- Because a baby's neck muscles may not be strong enough to support a helmet, do not ride a bike at all with a child under the age of 1 year.

Ski Helmets

Head injuries can occur during skiing, and when they occur, they can be devastating. Helmets are sport-specific, so do not wear a bike helmet on the slopes. Ski helmets should be worn.

References: The American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons: August 2022

Head Towards Safety,

Wear a Helmet

RISKS:

2020

1973

35%

decline in bicycle injury rate since CPSC's mandatory bicycle safety regulations took effect in 1976.

2021
Estimated Injuries

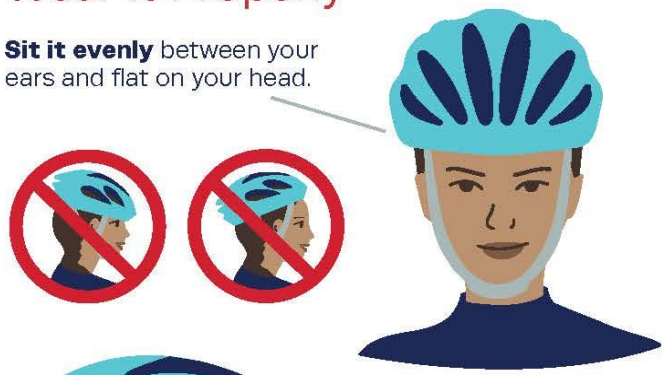
69,400

Bicycle & accessory related head injuries, separate from sports, treated in emergency departments for all ages (excluding powered bikes.)

TIPS TO KEEP SAFE:

Wear it Properly

Sit it evenly between your ears and flat on your head.



Wear it low on your forehead – 2 finger widths above your eye brows.

Tighten the chin strap* and adjust the pads inside for a snug and secure fit.

*Specific to bicycle helmets.

Get the Right Helmet Type

There are different helmets for different activities. Each type of helmet is made to protect your head from injuries related to the specific activities.

Check the Label

Does your helmet have a label inside showing it meets CPSC's federal safety standard? If not, don't use it.

Report the helmet to CPSC at **www.SaferProducts.gov**.

Replace When Needed

Replace the helmet after any impact to the helmet, to include dropping. Helmets are one-time use products and impacts can generally decrease the maximum effectiveness that particular helmet can provide. You may not see damage. Cracks in the shell, worn straps and missing pads or other parts are also reasons to replace a helmet.

United States
Consumer Product Safety Commission

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CPSC.gov
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