



Bicycle Safety



Keep in mind that many of the issues talked about in this handout can also be used when children ride on a scooter, skateboard, roller blades, or other types of recreational moving vehicles

What is BICYCLE SAFETY?

A bicycle is your child's first vehicle, not just a toy. Safety rules that your child learns now will effect his/her future driving habits.

All too often children are seriously injured or even killed when they fail to follow basic bicycle safety rules. Most children's bicycle accidents involve falls, not cars. Falls do not only occur in the street. They occur in the driveway, on a path, or in the park. They can happen anywhere and anytime. A child on a bicycle **ALWAYS** needs a helmet to protect his/her head in case of a fall.

How do I pick out a bike for my child?

1. Do not push your child to ride a two-wheeled bike until he/she is ready (usually about age 5 or 6 years old).
2. Take your child with you when you shop so that he/she can try out a bike. Buy a bike that is the **RIGHT SIZE**, not one to "grow into." Oversized bikes are especially dangerous.
3. How to test a bike for the proper fit:
 - a. Sitting on the seat with the hands on the handlebars, your child should be able to touch the balls of both feet on the ground.
 - b. Straddling the center bar, your child should be able to keep both feet flat on the ground with about a 1-inch clearance between the crotch and the bar.
 - c. If you buy a bike with hand brakes, be sure your child can comfortably grasp the brakes and apply enough pressure to stop.
4. Be sure the bike has brakes.



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When does my child need a bicycle helmet?

If your child is on a bike then they need a helmet. When buying your child's first bike, be sure to purchase a helmet as well.

How can I get my child to wear a helmet?

1. Have your child wear a helmet as soon as they start to ride a bike. It is never too late to get your child into a helmet.
2. There are important things to tell your child to convince him/her of the importance of helmet use:
 - a. Bikes are vehicles, not toys.
 - b. You love and value your child.
 - c. They can hurt their heads permanently or even die from head injuries.
 - d. The helmet will help protect them if they should fall.
3. Reward your kids for wearing helmets:
 - a. Praise them or give special treats or privileges when they wear their helmet without being told.
4. Be consistent. Do not let your child ride a bike unless they wear their helmet. It is important to wear a helmet on every ride, no matter how short.
5. Encourage your child's friends to wear helmets: Peer pressure can be used in a positive way.
6. Point out that bicycle racers are now required to wear helmets in the United States and in the Olympics.
7. Allow your child to decorate their helmet using stickers, markers or paint.

When using a child carrier with an Adult Bike:

1. It is NOT recommended that a child under the age of 2 or over the age of 4 be placed in a child carrier.
2. Remember also to use a helmet for your child and yourself.



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What bicycle safety rules should be followed:

1. You should set limits on when and where our children may ride. Most serious injuries occur when the bicyclist is hit by a motor vehicle.
2. Teach your children to:
 - a. Ride with traffic.
 - b. Stop and look both ways before entering the street.
 - c. Stop at all intersections.
 - d. Obey all traffic signals.
 - e. Before turning, use hand signals and look ALL ways.
 - f. Do not ride at dusk or dark.
 - g. Ride on smooth and dry pavement.
3. Children who ignore safety rules should be disciplined appropriately, such as by temporarily denying use of the bike.
4. Remember to check tires, brakes, seat and handlebar height yearly.
5. Children should learn how to care for their bikes.

The information contained in this handout is for general information only and should not be considered complete. For more information on bicycle safety, please ask your doctor.

The information in this handout came from The Children's Medical Center.