

## What You May Not Know About Bicycle Safety

### The Problem

- Bicycles are associated with more childhood injuries than any other consumer product except, the automobile.
- Every year, close to 176,000 children go to a hospital emergency room, because of bike accident injuries. Some children die due to head injuries.
- In Missouri in 2007, two children died while riding bicycles.
- Of the two fatalities, one child was wearing a helmet.

### Tips for Getting Kids to Wear Helmets

- Establish the helmet habit early. This habit should start when children get their first tricycle, to establish a link between wheeled vehicles, pavement and helmets.
- Let children pick their helmet. If children choose their own helmet, they may be more likely to buy into the idea.
- Wear a helmet yourself. Children learn from their parents. Whenever a parent rides their bike, they should put on a helmet.
- Talk to your children about why you want them to protect their heads. Let them know that their bikes are not toys, and they can permanently hurt their heads or even die from a head injury.
- Reward and praise children for wearing helmets.
- Encourage your child's friends to wear helmets.
- Give your child a short course in bicycle safety. Children need basic safety instructions.
- Point out when watching sports events, how many professional athletes use helmets. Football and hockey players, baseball batters and race car drivers all wear helmets.
- Take your child to a bicycle race. Bicycle racers are required to wear helmets in the United States, the Tour de France and almost everywhere. Children will see (usually close up) cool riders competing in an event while using helmets.
- Do not let children ride their bikes, unless they're wearing a helmet. If children are allowed to ride occasionally without their helmets, they will not believe messages about the importance of them.
- Plan bicycle outings together when all family members wear their helmets.

*(Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute)*

### Safe Riding Tips

- Wear a properly fitted bicycle helmet.
- Check your bicycle equipment. Before riding, make sure tires are inflated properly and that the brakes work.
- Adjust your bicycle to fit. Stand over your bicycle. There should be 1 to 2 inches between you and the top tube (bar), if using a road bike and 3 to 4 inches if it is a mountain bicycle. The seat should be level from front to back. The seat height should be adjusted to allow a slight bend at the knee when the leg is fully extended. The handlebar height should be at the same level with the seat.
- Control your bicycle. Always ride with at least one hand on the handlebars. Carry books and other items in a bicycle carrier or backpack.
- See and be seen. Always wear fluorescent, neon or other bright colors when riding day or night. Wear something that reflects light, such as reflective tape or markings, or flashing lights. Remember, just because you can see a driver doesn't mean they can see you.

•Avoid riding at night. It is more dangerous for children to ride bikes at night, than during the day. Do make sure there are reflectors on the front and rear of the bicycle, in addition to reflectors on tires. Many states require bicycles to have white lights on the front and red rear reflectors.

*(National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration)*

**The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests these “Rules of the Road”**

- When turning or stopping, always use hand signals.
- Look both ways at street corners and driveways.
- Always ride with the traffic, to the right.
- Always stop at STOP signs, at the curb.
- When you ride on the sidewalk, watch out for people.
- Riders must always wear their helmet.

**Resources**

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration,

[www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/bike/KidsandBikeSafetyWeb/](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/bike/KidsandBikeSafetyWeb/)

Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute, [www.bhsi.org/kidswear.htm](http://www.bhsi.org/kidswear.htm)

American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.aap.org/family/bicycle.htm](http://www.aap.org/family/bicycle.htm)

KidsHealth, [www.kidshealth.org/kid/watch/out/bike\\_safety.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/watch/out/bike_safety.html)