

Enjoy the ride

Your guide to bike safety



The facts:

- A properly fitted helmet can reduce the risk of head injuries by at least 45 percent, yet less than half of children 14 and under usually wear a bike helmet.
- Helmets can reduce the risk of severe brain injuries by 88 percent.
- More children ages 5 to 14 are seen in emergency rooms for injuries related to biking than any other sport.
- Adolescents, teens, and young adults have the highest rates of bicycle-related injuries seen in United States Emergency Departments.

Preparing for the ride

- Wear bright-colored clothing and use lights/reflectors to help be seen by drivers.
- Wear a helmet. It is the single most effective safety device available to reduce head injury and death from bicycle crashes.
- When choosing the right size bike for your child, make sure their feet can touch the ground when sitting on the seat.
- Check the bike chain, be sure brakes are working properly, gears shift smoothly and tires are secure and properly inflated.

While out riding

- Every child is different, but developmentally, it can be hard for kids to judge the speed and distance of cars until the age of 10. Until they are 10, limit riding to sidewalks, parks or bike paths.
- Ride with your children until you are confident, they can ride safely on their own.
- Adults should model and teach good biking behaviors.
- Ride on the sidewalk when you can. When riding on the road, ride in the same direction as traffic as far to the right as you can. **No matter where you ride, teach your child to stay alert and watch for cars.**

- When crossing the street, stop. Look left, right and left again before entering a street or crossing at an intersection. **Teach your children to make eye contact with drivers, making sure drivers are going to stop before they cross the street.**
- Encourage children to walk their bikes across the road if it is busy.
- Be aware of your surroundings and listen for traffic noise, such as a horn honking or moving cars.
- Learn and use hand signals and follow the rules of the road.
- Children should be able to demonstrate riding competence and knowledge of the rules of the road before riding with traffic.

How to fit a helmet

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, babies younger than one year old have a weak neck structure. Neither helmets nor bike travel is recommended for a child of this age.

- **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, no more than two fingers above the eyebrow.
- **Side straps:** Adjust the slider on both straps to form a "V" shape under, and slightly in front of, the ears.
- **Chin strap:** Buckle and tighten the chin strap until it is snug, so that no more than two fingers fit under the strap.
- **Double check the fit:** 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.

Letting your child pick the helmet or allowing them to decorate it (to make it their own), will increase the likelihood your child will wear it every ride.

Other wheeled sports

- Children should always wear a helmet for all wheeled sports activities.
- A properly fitted bike helmet is just as effective when riding a scooter, roller skating or rollerblading.
- When skateboarding or long boarding, make sure your child wears a CPSC certified skateboarding helmet.

Contact us

For more information, contact the Injury Prevention Program of Helen DeVos Children's Hospital at Corewell Health Grand Rapids Hospitals: **616.391.SAFE (7233)** or visit **helendevoschildrens.org/injuryprevention**