

Bike Safety for You and Your Family



Allina Health



Table of Contents

Bike Helmet Safety	2
Always Wear a Bike Helmet	2
Use the Right Size Bike	5
Make Sure Your Bike Works Right.....	5
Make Sure People Can See You	5
Follow Traffic Laws	6
Other Safety Tips	7
What You Should Know About Concussions	8

Bike Helmet Safety

Riding a bike is a great family activity to have fun and be active. Here are some safety tips to follow when you ride a bike.

Always Wear a Bike Helmet

It is important for you and your family to always wear a bike helmet. It can help prevent injury or even death from a bike accident.

Have each member of your family follow the information listed below.

How to wear a bike helmet

Here is how to make sure you are wearing a bike helmet the right way.

- **Is the helmet the right size?**

Your helmet should fit snugly. Make sure it doesn't move side to side. Some helmets come with sizing pads that can be used to make sure it fits your head.

- **Is the helmet in the right position?**

Your helmet should sit level on top of your head. The rim of the helmet should be one or two finger-widths above your eyebrows.

- **Have the side straps been adjusted?**

Make sure the straps of the helmet form a "V" shape under your ears. Adjust the sliders as needed.

- **Is the chin strap buckled?**

Buckle the strap and tighten it until it is snug. Make sure that no more than one or two fingers fit under the strap.

Bike helmet fit test

To make sure your helmet fits right, use this test. Open your mouth as wide as you can. You should feel the helmet hug or pull down on your head.

When to replace a helmet

It is important to replace your bike helmet if:

- it has been involved in a crash
- there is any damage to the helmet
- it gets too small.



Photo © Allina Health System

Your child's bike helmet should sit level on top of their head.



Photo © Allina Health System

Make sure the straps of the bike helmet form a "V" shape under your child's ears.

Tip

Your child should only wear a bike helmet when riding a bike. Do not wear a bike helmet when playing on a playground. The straps could get caught on the equipment.

Use the Right Size Bike

It's important to ride the right size bike. If it is too big or too small it can be unsafe to ride.

To make sure your bike is the right size, follow these general guidelines.

- When standing over your bike, there should be one to two inches of space between you and the top tube (bar). If you are riding a mountain bike, there should be about five inches of space.
- The seat height should be adjusted so that you have a slight bend in your knee when your leg is fully extended.
- The height of the handlebars should be at the same level as the seat.

Make Sure Your Bike Works Right

Before you go for a bike ride, be sure these parts of your bike are working right.

- Brakes need to slow and stop your bike.
- Tires need to be secure and inflated.
- Gears need to change smoothly (if your bike has gears).

Make Sure People Can See You

When riding your bike, you should always be alert for others (such as drivers and pedestrians) that may not see you.

To help people see you:

- wear bright colored or reflective clothing
- put reflectors and flashing lights on the front and back of your bike.

Follow Traffic Laws

When riding your bike, you will need to follow all traffic laws, including traffic lights, signs and lane markings.

Here are some general tips.

- Ride the same direction as traffic.
- Signal before you make a turn. Learn the correct hand signals so others know what you are going to do.
- Look both ways for vehicles coming out of or turning into driveways.
- Stop at the corners of sidewalks and streets to look for cars. Make sure the drivers can see you before crossing the road.

You can learn more about local traffic laws in your state drivers' licensing handbook. You can also visit these websites:

- **Minnesota:**
dot.state.mn.us/bike
- **Wisconsin:**
wisconsindot.gov/Pages/safety/education/bike

Street Riding Versus Sidewalk Riding

It is usually better for children 10 years old or younger to ride on the sidewalk.

Younger children may not fully understand how to make the right decisions when riding on the street.

Check your local traffic laws to make sure sidewalk riding is allowed.

Other Safety Tips

Young children shouldn't ride at night.

- Always ride with both hands on the handlebars.
- Carry additional items in a backpack.
- Watch for road hazards, such as potholes, gravel, broken glass, parked cars and large puddles.

What You Should Know About Concussions

Concussions

Concussions can happen in free play, recreational sports, youth leagues, or in high school and college sports.

A concussion is a blow to the head that affects how the brain works. It can also happen after a hit to the body that causes the head to move quickly back and forth.

A body hit, fall or minor bump to the head can cause a serious brain injury.

Concussion symptoms

A concussion is a brain injury. You can't see it but it causes changes in your child's behavior, thinking or physical actions.

Signs of a concussion can occur right away or hours or days later. Your child can have a concussion even if they aren't "knocked out" (loses consciousness).



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, watch for these symptoms if your child has sustained a concussion:

- headache
- problems with memory
- upset stomach (nausea) or vomiting
- balance issues or dizziness
- double or blurry vision
- being sensitive to light or sounds
- feeling hazy, foggy or groggy
- problems concentrating
- confusion
- not “feeling right”
- seizures.

Screening test before your child plays sports

A concussion screening test to check your child's learning and memory skills can be given before your child plays sports.

This first test is known as a baseline. Future test results will be compared to this one.

The test is simple and painless. Your child answers a series of questions using the ImPACT™ computer program to measure your child:

- learning and memory skills
- attention span
- reaction time
- ability to solve problems.

A trained health care provider supervises the test.

Your child's test results are kept in a secure database and will only be looked at by your health care provider when needed.

If your child has a concussion, a follow-up ImPACT test may be given at your clinic or your school. This will help your health care provider tell how severe the brain injury is and when your child is ready to return to play.

The ImPACT test should be repeated every 2 years so it remains valid as your child grows.

Treating concussions

Rest is the most important thing your child can do. Rushing back to play won't help your child's brain heal, and can be dangerous.

Follow your health care provider's directions. Please keep all follow-up appointments, even if your child is feeling well.

When to call for help

Call your health care provider if your child has any concussion symptoms, even if they received care by a health care team at the sporting event.

Call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency department if your child:

- passes out
- has trouble breathing
- has a severe headache
- has concentration problems (such as reading the same paragraph over and over)
- if symptoms quickly become worse.

Preventing concussions

Talk with your child's coach about what type of concussion policy the school or league has.

- Insist that your child follow safety procedures.
- This includes using the right equipment and playing fairly.
- Make sure your child is fully healed from a concussion before playing again. (Your health care provider will tell you when your child is ready.)
- Returning to play too soon can increase the risk and length of time it takes to get better.
- Be in contact with your child's teachers and coaches after a concussion. That way, a team of people can watch for signs of brain injury.

For more information

Visit allinahealth.org/concussion for more information about concussion awareness and information on locations that offer concussion screenings.

Some information adapted from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.



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