



### Bicycle Safety

Gas prices are soaring. The weather is warming up. More people of all ages are dusting off their bikes to use them for fun or alternative transportation. There are real health benefits from making that choice, but there are also some risks to take into account.



Children and teens are at special risk for bicycle injuries. Their coordination and judgment are still developing. They also tend to take more chances and underestimate their risk of being involved in an accident.

Adults, on the other hand, are more likely to be targets of harassment from aggressive drivers who don't want to share the road. Drivers are more likely to give children a wider berth than their older counterparts. Those who are middle aged and older may also resist using a helmet since it wasn't required when they were growing up. But helmets really do save lives – of all ages!

Bicycle accidents are second only to car crashes as a cause of childhood injuries. Head injury is the leading cause of death and permanent disabilities in bicycle accidents for people of all ages. Many of these serious injuries can be prevented.

#### SOME BASIC FACTS ABOUT BIKE SAFETY

- Nearly 60 percent of all childhood bicycle related deaths occur on local roads within a mile of the child's home.
- Dusk and dawn are particularly risky times to ride. Children under the age of 14 are most likely to be injured riding during these times.
- More than 80% of bicycle-related deaths in children below the age of 14 are related to the mistakes made by the cyclist.
- Helmets save lives! Young riders who choose not to wear them are 14 times more likely to die in a serious accident than those who do wear them.



#### SAFETY TIPS FOR RIDERS OF ALL AGES

- Wear helmets – and wear them correctly! Helmets should not be tipped back; they should be centered on the head, parallel with the shoulders.
- Make sure your bike is well maintained and be prepared for common mishaps like flat tires. Pull totally off the road to make repairs.
- Do not wear headphones while riding. They may block out the sound of horns or other audible signals of impending problems.
- Obey traffic rules, signs and signals. Use approved hand signals and stop at lights and stop signs.
- In particular, ride with the traffic – not against it! A bicycle is a vehicle, and it needs to follow the rules of the road.
- Cars can't avoid collisions with you if they can't see you!
  - Do not enter traffic from between parked cars.
  - Scan the road behind you. Rear view mirrors are a great idea!



- Don't pass cars on their right side. You can be lost in their blind spot. Go with the flow and be sure they see you.
  - In situations where you are unsure that drivers do see you, make eye contact before making any lane changes or other major moves.
  - Dress appropriately. Use reflective material on your clothing at night.
  - Equip your bike with a front headlight and a rear reflector light.
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- In roads with no bike lanes, ride to the right, but not too far to the right. Bike accidents often occur when drivers who don't see bikers open their car doors to exit the vehicle.
  - If roads have bike lanes – use them! Take special care when approaching intersections where the road and bike paths intersect. Cars generally have the right-of-way.
  - Ride single file, not next to one another.
  - Ride on familiar roads and paths and / or follow a map and plan your route carefully.
  - Always have water with you when you ride. Energy bars are a good idea too, especially on longer treks.
  - Take it slow, especially on unfamiliar roads where you don't know what hazards await you.
  - Carry a cell phone to use in case of accidents or emergencies.



Enjoy the weather.  
Enjoy the ride.  
Follow these simple rules to get to your destinations safely!