



Bicycle Helmet 101

A bicycle helmet can help prevent a life-threatening head injury — but you need to wear it correctly. Find out how...

It's a beautiful day for a bike ride. You fill your water bottle, lace up your shoes and head out. The thought of a head injury doesn't even cross your mind — but it should. Without a bicycle helmet, you're taking a chance that may cost you your life.

Why wear a bicycle helmet?

It's simple. If you fall from your bike, the bicycle helmet takes the force of the blow — instead of your head. When you're biking, wearing a bicycle helmet is the most effective way to prevent a life-threatening head injury.

And don't assume that bicycle helmets are just for kids. Adults face the same risks as children. The average careful bicyclist may still crash every 4,500 miles, according to the Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute. Although collisions with cars or other vehicles are likely to be the most serious, even a low-speed fall on a bicycle path can be dangerous.

Please Note: All participants in the MS 150 Bay to Bay Bike Tour are **required** to wear a helmet at all times while riding. This is mandatory!

Selecting a bicycle helmet:

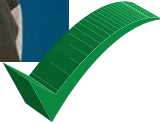
Bicycle helmets are cooler, more comfortable, easier to adjust and more stylish than ever before. There are plenty of inexpensive choices for kids and adults alike. Just remember the ground rules:

- ♥ **Make sure the helmet is safe.** Look for a seal of approval from the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), American National Standards Institute (ANSI) or Snell Foundation.
- ♥ **Make sure it fits snugly.** You shouldn't be able to move the bicycle helmet more than one inch in any direction — front to back or side to side. The sizing pads included with every helmet can help make the fit more secure. If you have long hair, a helmet with a ponytail port may offer the best fit.
- ♥ **Think about visibility.** If the helmet straps block your vision — even a little bit — choose another helmet. Likewise, make sure motorists and other cyclists can see you. Choose a white or brightly colored helmet.

Wearing a bicycle helmet:

The rules for wearing a bicycle helmet are the same for kids and adults, too. Wear the helmet flat on the top of your head. The helmet should cover the top of your forehead without tilting forward or backward.

Fasten the chin strap just below your chin. If the bicycle helmet doesn't feel snug, use the foam sizing pads that came with the helmet to get a better fit. The helmet shouldn't rock from front to back or side to side.

**Worn Correctly****Worn Incorrectly**

Avoid common mistakes:

If the bicycle helmet is tilted forward, the back of the head becomes more vulnerable to the force of a crash. To keep the helmet flat on your head, tighten the chin strap. If the helmet still tips forward, you may need a smaller helmet.

A bicycle helmet that tips backward is just as problematic. When this happens, the front and side of the head become vulnerable to the force of a crash. Again, tighten the chin strap. If the helmet still tips backward, you may need a smaller helmet.

Other factors to consider:

Teach your children to remove their bicycle helmets when they're playing — especially before climbing on playground equipment or climbing trees. The helmet and chin strap may snag and pose a choking hazard.

If an accident occurs, throw out the bicycle helmet and replace it with a new one. Even if the helmet looks undamaged, it may not be able to withstand the force of another blow.

If you rent a bicycle and helmet for short-term use, examine the helmet closely for signs of damage, such as dents, cracks, scrapes or asymmetry. If a rental helmet looks excessively worn or fits improperly, ask for a different one.

Play it safe:

Now that you know the basics, put them to good use. Wear your bicycle helmet every time you ride your bike — and make sure your children do, too. Don't let the thrill of the ride turn into a tragedy.

By Mayo Clinic Staff

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