



Bike-Helmet Safety Smarts

Adults and children who ride bicycles should always wear a helmet. Many states require they do so.

Wearing a properly fitting bicycle helmet reduces the risk of serious head injuries by 85 percent, according to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.

Whether on an adult or a child, a helmet that has been approved by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission and fits correctly will cushion the head in a fall and protect it from impact with other objects.

Riders whose bicycle helmets don't fit right are at twice the risk for serious head injuries, compared with those whose helmets fit properly.

The following guidelines can help you fit a bike helmet correctly.

The right fit – Look for these elements in a helmet:

- It should comfortably touch your head all the way around.
- It should be level on your head.
- It should extend as low as possible to help cover the sides of your head.
- It should be stable enough to resist violent shakes or hard blows and stay in place.
- It shouldn't rock back and forth more than an inch or so.
(If you can tilt a helmet while someone is wearing it, then something's wrong.)
- It should protect your forehead. The helmet should be only one to two finger widths above your eyebrows or eyeglass frames.

Adjust the straps

A properly adjusted chinstrap fits snugly against your chin, with the V of the side straps meeting just below your ear and no slack to let the helmet rock back and forth.

It's too loose if it hangs down or if you can slide two fingers under it.

Shake your head when you believe the straps are adjusted right. Then put your palm under the front edge of the helmet and push up and back. If you can move the helmet more than an inch or so, you need to tighten the strap beside and in front of your ear.

Now reach back and grab the back edge of the helmet and pull up. If you can move the helmet more than one inch, tighten the rear strap.

When you're done, your helmet should feel solid on your head and comfortable.

If you've been in a fall with the helmet on and the helmet hit the ground or an object, you should replace the helmet even though there may be no apparent damage.

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