

Head Out on Your Bike This Summer!

Summer is an ideal time to get outdoors and ride bike! If you and your child decide to “head” out on your bike ensure that you always have one piece of equipment with you, a helmet! Head injuries are the leading cause of serious injury and death to kids on bikes. A properly fitted, correctly worn bike helmet protects the brain from absorbing the force from a fall or crash, reducing the risk of a serious head injury by up to 85%. That means four out of five brain injuries could have been prevented by wearing a helmet.

In fact, the most serious injuries and deaths associated with children on bicycles involve collisions with motor vehicles. Most of these injuries involve the head and brain and even injuries that seem minor can cause permanent brain damage. To protect your child’s head ensure they wear a helmet every time they ride. Here are some tips to follow when purchasing a bicycle helmet:

Get the right kind of helmet: Choose a bicycle helmet for cycling, in-line skating and scooter riding. Skateboarders need special skateboarding helmets which cover more of the back of the head.

Purchase a helmet with an approved standards label: Helmets sold in Canada are certified by CSA (Canadian Standards Association), CPSC (Consumer Product Safety Commission), Snell or ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials). Check for this label inside or on the helmet. These labels certify that the helmet design has been tested by the manufacturer.

Get the right size: Helmets come in different sizes. There are special helmets for toddlers (under the age of five) that provide protection to the back of the head. Some children may outgrow the toddler helmet before the age of 5 and should use a larger helmet.

Ensure the helmet fits properly: The helmet should cover the top of the forehead and should rest about two fingers’ width above the eyebrows. The side straps should fit snugly around the ears in a “v” shape. The buckles on the side strap should fit right under the ears. The chin strap should be tight enough that only one finger can fit between the strap and the chin.

Replace your helmet after 3-5 years or after a crash involving the head: After three-five years, the plastics of the helmet dry out and may become brittle. As well, older helmets may not meet current safety standards. Helmets are designed to protect the user against one crash. After a crash where the cyclist hit their head, the foam inside the helmet becomes compressed. The helmet should be replaced, even if it does not look damaged.

Remember that people of all ages should wear a helmet including you! You are your child’s best role model. To ensure the safety of your child, children under the age of 10 should never ride on the road.

Bicycling is a great way to get out and enjoy the beautiful weather while being active; there are lots of wonderful bike trails to discover in Western Newfoundland. Get out there with your child but remember, protect yourself and your children by wearing properly fitted helmets!

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