

Raising Safe Kids: One Stage at a Time

Bike Helmets: A Necessity, Not an Accessory

A child is injured in a bike-related incident almost every two minutes. Whether your child uses a small bicycle with training wheels or a big kid's bike, make sure he or she wears a helmet correctly on every ride. It's the single most effective way to prevent a serious head injury from bike crashes.

Here's how to choose a helmet:

- A bike helmet should be labeled to indicate that it **meets the safety standards** set by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). Look for the CPSC certification sticker inside the helmet and on the box.
- As long as it's certified, **let kids pick out their own helmet**. If they think a helmet looks cool, they'll be more likely to wear it, even when you're not around.

Do the "eyes, ears and mouth" test to **get the right fit**. A helmet should sit on top of the head in a level position, and shouldn't rock forward and backward or side to side. The helmet straps must always be buckled but not too tightly.

- **EYES check:** Place the helmet on your child's head. Have your child look up and he or she should see the bottom rim of the helmet. The rim should be one to two finger-widths above his or her eyebrows.
- **EARS check:** Make sure the straps of the helmet form a "V" under the ears when buckled. The strap should be snug but comfortable.
- **MOUTH check:** Ask your child to open his or her mouth as wide as he or she can. Does he or she feel the helmet hug his or her head? If not, tighten those straps and make sure the buckle is flat against his or her skin.

Remember bike helmets are for biking. Kids should *not* wear bike helmets on the playground, where the straps can get caught on equipment and cause injury, or for activities that require specialized helmets such as skiing or football.

FAQs

Q: Is it true my child can wear a bike helmet when doing other wheeled sports?

A: It's essential that your child wears a helmet for all wheeled sports activities. It's true that a properly-fitted **bike helmet** is just as effective when **riding a scooter, roller skating or inline skating**. However, when **skateboarding and longboarding**, make sure your child wears a skateboarding helmet.

Q: When should I replace my child's bike helmet?

A: A bike helmet should be replaced:

- If it has been in a crash. Impact crushes some of the foam and the helmet is less protective although the helmet may not look like it's damaged.
- If it's from the 1980s.
- If the outside of the helmet is made from foam or cloth, instead of plastic.
- If it lacks a CPSC sticker.
- If you can't adjust it to fit correctly. Maybe it's too small for your child by now...