

FACTS FIRST: Bicycle Helmet Safety

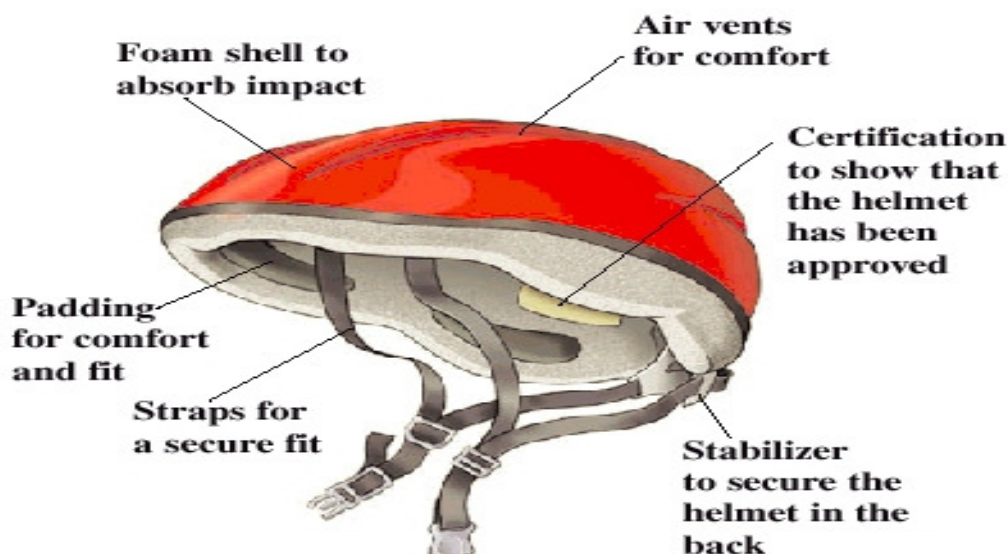
All bike riders should wear bicycle helmets. Each year in the United States, about **800 bicyclists are killed** and another **500,000 end up in hospital emergency rooms**. About two-thirds of the deaths and one-third of the injuries involve the head and face. Wearing a helmet can **reduce the risk of head injury** to bicyclists by as much as **85 percent**. **If you fall from your bike the, the helmet take the force of the blow-instead of your head. For kids and adults alike, wearing a bicycle helmet is the most effective way to prevent a life-threatening head injury.**

Make sure the helmet is safe.

Look for the seal of approval or **Consumer Product Safety Committee (CPSC) sticker inside the helmet**. This label or sticker ensures that the helmet will provide a high level of protection in the event of an impact. Helmets manufactured after March 1999 are required by law to meet the CPSC standard. The "ASTM," "ANSI," and "Snell" labels also meet the CPSC standards. (These were voluntary safety standards in place prior to 1999.)

Used or hand-me-down helmets

If considering a used or hand-me-down helmet, **never purchase or use a helmet that is cracked, broken, or has been in a crash. If you are in a biking accident, throw out the bicycle helmet and replace it with a new one.** Keep in mind that used or older helmets might have cracks you cannot see and might not meet current safety standards if manufactured before 1999.



The rules for wearing a bicycle helmet are the same for children and adults:

Wear the helmet flat on the top of your head.

Make sure the helmet covers the top of your forehead without tilting forward or backward, and the straps form a V shape under each ear.

Fasten the chin strap below your chin — not to the side or along your jaw.

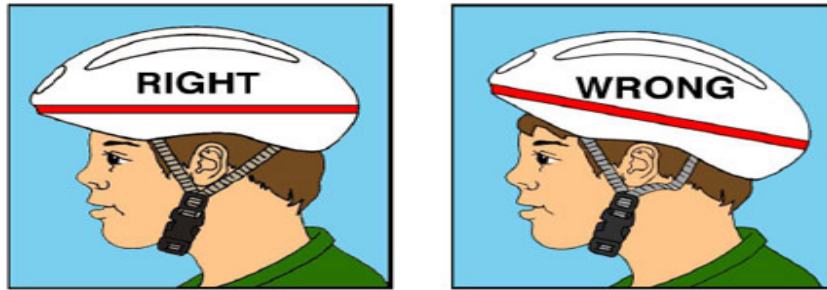
If the bicycle helmet rocks from side to side or front to back, use the sizing pads that came with the helmet to get a better fit.

How can I tell if my bicycle helmet fits properly?

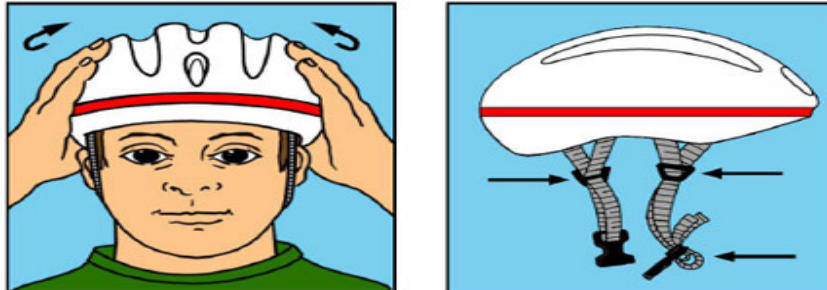
Make sure that it fits snugly.

When the chin strap is buckled, a bicycle helmet should have a **snug but comfortable fit**. You should **not be able to move the helmet from side-to-side or up and down**. The helmet should **sit level on the head** (NOT TILTED BACK) and rest low on the forehead. The bottom edge of the helmet should be one to two finger widths above the eyebrow. Another technique to check proper positioning is this: **your eyes should be able to see the very edge of the helmet when looking upward**.

The **straps** of the helmet need to be even and should **form a "Y"** that comes together right at the bottom of the earlobe. The straps should be snug against the head. **The buckled chin strap should leave only enough room to allow one finger to be inserted between the buckle and chin. When opening your mouth, you should be able to feel the helmet pull down on your head.**



Wear the helmet flat on the head, not tilted back at an angle!



Make sure the helmet fits snugly and does not obstruct the field of vision. Make sure the chin strap fits securely and that the buckle stays fastened.

What can I do if I have trouble fitting the bicycle helmet?

Bicycle helmets are available in several different sizes and with different thicknesses of internal padding to custom fit the helmet to the user. **To get a snug fit, internal pads should be placed in areas where there is space between the head and the helmet along the front, back, and/or sides of the helmet.** The pads should be positioned evenly around the inside of the helmet. If the helmet does not feel snug after adjusting the pads and when the straps are correctly buckled, try adjusting the pads again or try another helmet.

Keep in mind that you should not be able to remove a properly fitted and strapped-on helmet from the head despite any degree of twisting or pulling.

What else can be done to encourage helmet use?

To encourage your child to wear a helmet, start the helmet-wearing habit early.

All bike riders — including those riding a tricycle — should wear bicycle helmet.

As long as the helmet fits properly, let your child pick out his or her helmet. They'll be more apt to wear a helmet if they have selected it.

Adults should set an example and wear a helmet themselves when biking, skating or skateboarding.

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



Play it safe

Now that you know bicycle helmet 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.