



## *Wellness Program — Bicycle Safety Tips*

### Bicycle safety for all ages

Riding a bicycle is like any activity — the better you do it, the more fun you have. Bicycling can be dangerous if you don't follow some simple safety guidelines. More than 580,000 bike riders are treated every year in the emergency room for injuries resulting from biking.

The more you know about how to properly ride a bicycle, the safer and more fun it can be. By following some simple guidelines, you can prevent accidents. Independence Administrators provides this guide so you and your family can enjoy safe cycling.

This guide is a part of our efforts to help you stay healthy and prevent injuries. Many of the tips can be applied to make roller blading and skateboarding safer too.

Ride Safely — When riding your bike on the road, always assume drivers of cars, trucks, and buses do not see you. Most accidents happen because the driver cannot see the bike rider. When you ride, watch out for movements such as:

- cars pulling out from driveways or side streets;
- children playing or running;
- vehicles changing lanes and car doors that open suddenly.

Enjoy safe cycling by following these simple guidelines. Many of these tips make roller blading and skateboarding safer too.

### The rules of the road

Bike riders must follow the same rules of the road that car drivers do:

- **Ride on the right side of the road.**  
Use a bike lane or path if there is one.
- **Stop at all stop signs.**  
Obey all traffic lights and stop signs, just as you would if you were driving a car. When you are walking your bike across the street, obey the "Walk" and "Don't Walk" signs.
- **Look both ways at all corners.**  
Look left, right, and left again at every corner.

Even if there is no stop sign at a corner, it is a good idea to stop, and then move on slowly. Car drivers don't always see bike riders.

- **Watch out at driveways.**

Many driveways are lined by trees or bushes. Look left, right, and left again when leaving a driveway. Even when the road is clear, go slowly out of the driveway so you can stop if you need to.

- **Use your ears as well as your eyes.**

Your ears are very important to safe bike riding. Never use headphones or earbuds when you are riding because you won't be able to hear cars, horns, or people.

- **Avoid road hazards.**

Remember that your wheels may get stuck in small objects like sewer grates, railroad tracks, or gravel. To avoid crashes, ride straight over railroad tracks and sewer grates. Walk your bike over wet things such as leaves, steel bridges, or grates.

- **Practice braking.**

Practice braking in a safe place, such as your driveway, an empty lot, or a playground. Practice braking hard by leaning back over the rear wheel to add weight. If your bike has hand brakes, squeeze the rear wheel break harder than the front wheel break so you don't tip forward. Always buy foot (coaster) brakes for children.

- **Use turn signals.**



Left Turn  
Put your left arm  
straight out, pointing  
left.



Right Turn  
Put your left arm  
straight up.



Stop  
Put your left arm  
straight down.



Always ride a bike that fits.

Bikes that are too big or too small are unsafe, especially for children. Buy your child a bike that fits now.

### How to select a bike

Everyone should ride a bike that fits. Bikes that are too big or too small are not comfortable and not safe. When you are seated on your bike, you should be able to put one foot on the ground without leaning the bike to either side. When you buy a bike for a child, buy one that fits the child now. Do not buy one the child will “grow into.”

Follow these steps when buying a bike for a child:

- Ask the child to stand over the bike with both feet touching the ground. There should be an inch or two of space between the top bar and the child’s crotch.
- Adjust the seat so that the child can sit on the seat and touch the tips of his or her toes on the ground.
- Place the child’s elbow along the top bar, touching the front of the seat. The fingertips should just reach the handlebar stem.
- Make sure you choose a bike with foot (coaster) brakes for children. Coaster brakes work by pushing backwards on the pedals.



### Buy a helmet and wear it

You should always wear a helmet when you ride a bike. Over 65,000 people injure their heads each year in bike accidents. Helmets decrease serious head and brain injuries by 85%. They can even save your life.

A helmet will absorb the shock of a crash and protect your head from sharp objects. A good helmet will also keep your head cooler in hot weather and warmer in cold weather. Wear a brightly colored helmet so it will be easier for car drivers to see you.

Not only is it especially important for children to wear bicycle helmets, it’s the law in some states. If you have a young baby, check with a doctor about when the baby’s neck muscles will be strong enough to support a helmet.

Make sure the helmet you get is a good helmet. High priced helmets are not always the best. A helmet should have a sticker on it that shows it has been certified by the Snell Memorial Foundation Standard (SNELL) or approved by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

All helmets should fit well. They should:

- cover the top of your forehead and sit level on your head;
- have straps tight enough so that the helmet does not slide in any direction or rock from side to side;
- have a chin strap that is easy for you or your child to buckle.



Make sure drivers can see you when you ride your bike.

Bright colors, reflectors, reflective tape, and a light can help warn people that you are coming.

### Make sure you are noticed

- **Wear bright clothing.**  
Bright, light colors will help drivers see you as you ride your bike. Yellow is best. Red, orange, and white are also good.
- **Use bells and horns.**  
They will help warn people that you are coming.
- **Put reflectors on your bike.**  
Reflectors help drivers see you when you ride your bike. The law says that every bike must have reflectors. Your bike should have:
  - a white front reflector;
  - a red rear reflector;
  - two white or yellow reflectors on the wheels.

It is also good to buy retro-reflective tape and put it on the sides of the pedals. Keep your reflectors clean and replace any that are broken. Attach a tall, brightly colored flag to the back of your child's bicycle.

Try not to ride your bike at night. If you must, the law says you need a front light that can be seen from 500 feet away. You also need a light on the back of your bike, and retro-reflective tape on your helmet and jacket.



### Here's how to ride in comfort

- **If your legs feel sore after a ride, massage them.**  
Sit with your legs stretched out and your back against a wall. Rub your lower legs, knees, and thighs, working upward toward your heart.
- **Stretch out before and after you ride.**  
Stretch your legs, upper and lower back, neck, and shoulders. Stretch for five minutes before you ride. This will help lower your chance of muscle injury.
- **Ride slowly the first and last 5 to 10 minutes of your ride.**  
This “warm up” and “cool down” will help your muscles adjust.
- **Drink plenty of water.**  
Drink before you get thirsty. Carry a water bottle on your bike and drink often. Try to drink eight ounces of water before and after you ride. Avoid riding when it's very hot and humid.
- **Wear a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher.**  
This will help you prevent a sunburn. Wear a helmet with a visor or sunglasses that don't block your vision to protect your eyes from the sun and wind.
- **Protect your hands and your seat.**  
Keep your hands from getting numb by wearing bike gloves or padding your handlebars. Avoid saddle sores by wearing lined, comfortable shorts. Check the height, angle, and position of your seat. If you can, stand for a minute every half hour on long rides.