



## Bicycle Safety

Each year over 450 children on average present to the Princess Margaret Hospital Emergency Department as a result of a bicycle injury. The majority of these injuries occur on public roads. Most cycling injuries do not involve another vehicle, but occur when children fall off their bike after crashing into an object.

### Riding Bicycles

It is important that children are taught the road rules for safe cycling practices. Parents and carers should be a role model and encourage these safe practices:

- Obey the rules of the road and know what each traffic sign means.
- Current WA legislation states that everyone must wear an approved cycling helmet that meets Australian Standards (AS2063:2008 – Bicycle helmets) and fits the child's head correctly.



- For young cyclists, a footpath or shared path is the best place to cycle, unless a *no bicycles* sign is on display. When using footpaths, look out for cars entering or exiting driveways.
- Children under the age of ten should cycle with responsible adults. Most children in that age group do not have the skills to cycle safely without supervision.
- Avoid riding on busy streets and riding at night.
- Use the bell before passing others.
- Always make a shoulder check before signaling and turning. If there is traffic, stop by the side of the road

and wait for a gap before turning.

- Wear brightly coloured clothing to increase the visibility of the cyclist to other road users.
- Cyclists should always give way to pedestrians.
- Help children understand when it is safe to cross the road. Teach them to *stop* before entering the road, *look* in all directions, *listen* and *think* about when it is safe to cross the road.
- Teach children to walk their bikes when crossing the street, crosswalk or railway crossings.
- Avoid listening to loud music when cycling. It is important that the rider can hear what is going on around them.

There are a number of providers available who can teach kids how to ride. For example Cycling Australia has a national junior riding programme designed for kids. For more information visit

<http://www.letsride.com.au/>.

### Bicycle Safety Checklist

#### 1. Bicycle Size

Check the bicycle is the right size for your child. When sitting on the bicycle, the toes should touch the ground on both sides.

#### 2. Safety Devices

Ensure the child's bicycle is equipped with safety devices such as lights, reflectors, a bell or horn and an effective brake. Also regularly check that these are in good condition.

#### 3. Tyres

Check the condition of the tyres, looking out for bald spots, bulges and cuts. The tyre should not "squash" when firmly squeezed.

#### 4. Chains

Chains should be frequently oiled and should not be too loose.

#### 5. Pedals

Pedals must spin freely.



## Choosing a Helmet

- Involve the rider in buying the helmet. Make sure they are happy with the appearance.
- Try it on for comfort and fit. Head size in centimetres and helmet size in centimetres may be different shapes so not every helmet will fit snugly.
- Test the fit. Adjust the straps and do it up. It should sit straight on the head. Place your palm under the front of the helmet and push up and back. The helmet should not move.
- Don't buy a helmet that is too big so the child can grow into it. It will be too big to protect the child now.
- Child helmets are vital for children up to age five or six. After that, their head is almost adult size and they should be able to wear adult helmets.



- The helmet should feel comfortable and have good airflow, particularly if you live in a warm climate. Make sure the helmet has an Australian Standards sticker, these helmets have been tested and approved (AS2063).

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## Second-hand Bicycles and Helmets

- If choosing to use a second hand bicycle make sure it is in good condition and meets all of the safety requirements.
- Second-hand helmets may not be a bargain. It can be difficult to see damage to the foam lining. A damaged helmet will not protect the rider. With second-hand helmets you may also be limited in choice for comfort and fit.

## Cycling in Rural Areas

- Many people think the country is a safer place for children to ride their bikes, but country kids are just as likely to lose control of their bikes.
- Country riders also have to deal with a range of road conditions such as gravel, potholes, slippery surfaces etc. Traffic is also permitted to travel at greater speeds in some country areas.

## Child Carrier Seats and Trailers

Parents and carers may choose to use a child carrier seat on the bicycle or tow a trailer to transport children. This is legal to do so given the following safety precautions are taken:

- The rider must be at least 16 years of age.
- An approved and securely fastened helmet must be used by children in child carrier seats and children sitting in a trailer being towed by a bicycle.
- Children must be under 10 years old to sit in the trailer being towed by a bicycle.

References:

- SDERA  
<http://www.sdera.wa.edu.au/>

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