

Head Smart: Bike Helmet Safety

WEARING A CERTIFIED BIKE HELMET CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE

Research shows that wearing a certified bike helmet can reduce the risk of serious head injury by up to 85 per cent. But all helmets are not created equal. Cyclists need to buy helmets specifically designed to reduce the risk of head injury.

Many jurisdictions have legislation requiring children, and sometimes adults, to wear a certified bicycle helmet. For instance, in Ontario, all bicycle riders under the age of 18 must wear a certified helmet. Provinces may also require bicycles to be equipped with either a horn, bell or gong, and all provinces require bikes to be equipped with front lights and rear reflectors if they are ridden between dusk and dawn.

What to look for in a bike helmet

Bicycle helmets come in a wide range of colours, styles and sizes to fit every head and budget. Most are well ventilated, comfortable and stylish. Here's what you should look for when shopping for a bicycle helmet.

Certification



Look for a certification mark. A helmet should bear the certification mark of a standards organization such as CSA.

Helmets should bear the manufacturer's identification, model number, size, and warning on limits of protection the helmet offers. As well, helmets must be labeled with instructions on how to ensure proper fit.



WRONG

Fit

Proper fit is essential for safety. Try helmets on before purchasing to make sure you pick one that fits snugly and is comfortable. Check for stability - when the straps and comfort pads are adjusted, the helmet should not move forward, backward or come off. It should sit level on the head and extend down to about two fingers (3 cm) above the eyebrows.



WRONG

Ventilation

Look for air vents that allow heat to escape, providing coolness and perspiration control.



RIGHT

Attachment System

Front and rear straps should meet just below each ear when tightly adjusted. The chin straps should be snug without pinching. Visors provide cyclists with additional protection from the sun and rain, etc.

Visibility

Brightly coloured helmets make the rider more visible in traffic. Reflective strips enhance visibility. Avoid dark-coloured or black helmets since they may be difficult for motorists to see, especially at night.

Replacement

Bicycle helmets are designed to crush on impact. They act as shock absorbers, protecting our heads by cushioning impact. So, replace a helmet after it has been involved in a crash. Normal wear and tear may also put dents in a helmet that are not visible but may decrease its safety.

Additional information available from the City of Toronto (www.city.toronto.on.ca/cycling/safety/helmet/)