

GET A HEADS UP ON CHILDRENS BICYCLE HELMET SAFETY



Is your child starting to discover the joy of riding a bike? To help make sure a head injury doesn't spoil their fun, don't forget a helmet! Here are some questions you may have when choosing a bicycle helmet for your child.

HOW SHOULD A CHILD'S BICYCLE HELMET FIT?

- A helmet should be worn squarely on top of the head, covering the top of the forehead. Your child should be able to see the brim of the helmet when glancing up. Make sure the helmet sits parallel to the ground when your child's head is upright. The helmet fits well if it doesn't move around on the head or slide down over your child's eyes when it is pushed or pulled, or your child shakes their head. The chin strap should be adjusted to fit snugly.

HOW CAN I TELL IF A BIKE HELMET WILL KEEP MY CHILD SAFE?

- You should only buy a helmet that meets the bicycle helmet safety standards of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). Check the inside of the helmet to confirm.

ARE THERE BIKE HELMETS FOR INFANTS?

- Yes. Many infant-sized helmets are of the soft-shell variety. They are light, an important consideration for small children whose necks may not be strong enough to comfortably hold a hard-shell helmet. Babies younger than 1 year old have relatively weak neck structure. Neither helmets nor bike traveling is recommended.

HOW LONG WILL A CHILD'S BICYCLE HELMET FIT?

- An infant's or child's helmet should fit for several years. Most models have removable fitting pads that can be replaced with thinner ones as the child's head grows. But keep in mind that helmets should be replaced every 5 years, or in the manufacturer's recommended time frame, since materials can degrade over time.

WHICH IS BETTER: HARD-SHELL OR SOFT-SHELL HELMETS?

- The essential part of the helmet for impact protection is a thick layer of firm polystyrene, or plastic foam, that crushes on impact, absorbing the force of the blow. All helmets require a chin strap to keep them in place in a crash.

Hard-shell bicycle helmets also have a hard outer shell of plastic or fiberglass that provides a shield against penetration by sharp objects. The hard shell also holds the polystyrene together if it cracks in a fall or crash.

Soft-shell bicycle helmets have no hard outer shell but are made of an extra-thick layer of polystyrene covered with a cloth cover or surface coating. The cloth cover is an essential part of many soft-shell helmets. If the helmet comes with a cover, the cover must always be worn to hold the helmet together if the polystyrene cracks on impact.

Both types of helmets meet CPSC standards; the main difference is style and comfort. The soft-shell helmets are lighter than the hard-shell versions but may be less durable. Although there is no consensus on the relative safety of the 2 types, models of both types have passed the CPSC test.

For more information on Children's bicycle helmet safety, visit:

www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-play/Pages/bicycle-helmets-what-every-parent-should-know.aspx



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