



Bicycle Safety



Riding a bicycle is a fun and healthy way to travel. We want you to stay injury-free, so please follow these tips to make your ride safe and enjoyable.

Always wear a helmet.

We see a lot of head injuries at the Joel A. Halpern Regional Trauma Center of people who were not wearing helmets when they crashed. In New York State, bike helmets are required for all riders under the age of 14. Wearing a helmet is the best way both adults and children can prevent head injuries from a bicycle crash.

- **Buy one that you really like.** You will (hopefully) be wearing it each time you ride, so you want to be motivated to wear it.
- **Make sure it fits well.** See below for detailed information on how to fit a helmet.
- **Look for the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) sticker** to make sure it meets the correct safety standards.
- **Be a “roll” model.** Both children and adults should wear a helmet each time they ride, and children will follow a parent’s or guardian’s lead. Show children you practice safe riding.
- **Replace your helmet if it has been in a crash.** The damage might not be visible, but it is important to replace the helmet so you are protected.

Obey all traffic signs, signals, and lane markings.

Bicycles must follow the same rules of the road that other vehicles follow, like stopping at red lights and stop signs, yielding to traffic that has the right-of-way, and stopping for pedestrians in a crosswalk. If you are in a right-turn-only lane, make sure you are turning right; don’t go straight.

Always ride with traffic, not against it.

Motorists look for vehicles (bikes included) going in the same direction that they are going, and wrong-way traffic is easily overlooked.

Keep both hands on the handlebars and be ready to brake.

Look for loose gravel, pot holes, sewer grates, and vehicles entering the roadway. Slow down at intersections and congested areas and give yourself extra distance to stop when it’s raining.

Never ride with headphones.

You may not hear the sounds of vehicles coming up behind you, or warnings from pedestrians and others of impending danger.

Use hand signals.

Hand signals tell motorists and pedestrians what you intend to do.

- **Left turn:** Extend your left arm straight out, parallel to the ground.

- Right turn: Extend the upper part of your left arm straight out and bend at the elbow so your hand is pointing up like the letter L.
- Slow or stop: Extend the upper part of your left arm straight out and bend at the elbow so your hand is pointing down like the number 7.

Wear bright colored clothing.

Fluorescent or bright colored clothing will make you more visible to motorists during the day and at dawn and dusk. At night, wear clothing with retro-reflective tape or markings.

If you ride at night, use lights.

A front light and a rear red reflector or flashing red light make you more visible to motorists.

Keep your bike in good repair.

Make sure the seat is adjusted to fit you, check your brakes and the air pressure in your tires routinely, and tighten loose bolts when necessary.

Never ride a bicycle under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Alcohol and some medications can affect your balance and inhibit your ability to respond quickly to an unsafe situation. If you are planning to drink or take medications that may slow your reaction time, leave your bike at home and ask someone who is sober to drive you.

How to Fit a Bicycle Helmet

1. Measure your head and then try on several helmets until you find one that feels right.
2. Make sure the helmet is level on your head. When you look up, the rim should be barely visible. It should fit low on your forehead. There shouldn't be more than one or two fingers of distance between the rim and your eyebrow.
3. The side straps should form a Y below your ear.
4. Center the buckle under your chin and adjust the straps.
5. When the chin strap is buckled, it should be snug against the chin so when you open your mouth very wide the helmet pulls down a little bit. You should be able to put one or two fingers between your chin and the strap.
6. Make sure the helmet doesn't move from side to side or back and forth when it is secure on your head. If it does, adjust the straps or pads some more. If it is still loose, you may need a smaller helmet.
7. Roll the rubber band down to the buckle to secure the straps and keep the buckle from slipping.



Enjoy your ride!

For more information, please contact Elizabeth Corcoran, Trauma Injury Prevention and Outreach Coordinator, at (914) 493-5846.