

Bicycle Safety and Summer Fun

Summer is here and children are out in full force, either learning to ride their bikes or enjoying their independence and freedom as they pedal around town. More than 70 percent of children ages 5 to 14 ride bikes. This age group rides about 50 percent more than the average bicyclist and accounts for approximately one-third of all bicycle-related deaths and more than two-thirds of all bicycle related injuries. St. Charles County statistics show that 1644 children in this age group were treated in emergency rooms for cycling injuries between 1994-1997. Although bicycles are fun, children can be seriously injured or killed if they fail to follow basic bicycle safety rules. The following list of prevention tips will help you and your family make every bike ride safe.

- A bicycle helmet is a necessity and must be worn every time and everywhere you ride.
- Wear a bicycle helmet correctly. It should sit on top of the head in a level position, covering the top of the forehead. The helmet fits well if it does not rock forward or back or from side to side. The chinstrap should fit snugly.
- Buy a helmet that meets or exceeds the bicycle safety standards of the American

National Standards Institute (ANSI) or the Snell Memorial Foundation and or the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM). Any helmet meeting these standards is labeled. Check the inside.

- Replace a helmet that has been through a serious fall or accident.
- Learn the rules of the road and obey all traffic laws. Ride on the right side of the road with traffic. Use appropriate hand signals. Respect traffic signals. Stop and look both ways before entering a street.
- Never ride at night. Always put your bike away when the sun goes down.
- Choose the right size bicycle for your child.
- Sitting on the seat with hands on the handlebar, your child must be able to place the balls of both feet on the ground.
- Straddling the centerbar, your child should be able to keep both feet flat on the ground with a one-inch clearance between the crotch and the bar.
- When buying a bike with hand brakes for an older child, make sure that the child can grasp the brakes and apply enough pressure to stop the bike.

Basic safety measures like these can keep bicycle riding enjoyable and safe for your child.