

CYCLING & SKATING SAFETY



Cycling, Skateboarding and Inline Skating

consumer *brief*

Working out with a bike, skateboard, or inline skates is a fun way to stay healthy and enjoy the outdoors.

It's important to know that these sports come with risks – but by following a few safety tips, you and your children can enjoy them responsibly.

Most of the information in this Consumer Brief comes from the Nemours Center for Children's Health Media at www.KidsHealth.org, and from Safe Kids Worldwide at www.SafeKids.org.

WEAR A HELMET

First and foremost, wear a helmet. New Jersey law requires those who are under 17 years of age to wear a helmet while riding a bike, skateboard or inline skates.

More children ages 5 to 14 are seen in emergency rooms for injuries related to bike riding than any other sport, according to Safe Kids International. Approximately 55 percent of children fail to wear a helmet every time they ride a bike – even though helmet use is the single most effective way to reduce bicycle-related fatalities. **Every \$12 spent on a bicycle helmet for a child generates \$580 in cost-saving benefits to society.**

Bike helmets- Look for one that is well ventilated and fits comfortably on your head without moving around. Look inside for either a CPSC (Consumer Product Safety Commission) sticker or a Snell sticker. Only buy helmets that are approved by either of these two safety organizations.

Any bike store can help you adjust your helmet so it fits properly.

Skateboarding and inline skating helmets- Get a helmet that is specifically meant for skateboarding and/or inline skating. These come lower down in the back, toward the base of the skull, for maximum protection in the event of a backward fall.

Look for a sticker inside the helmet saying it meets the ASTM F1492 skateboard helmet standard.

All helmets- Look for a helmet that fits comfortably on your head without moving around. All helmets should have a strong strap and buckle, and the strap should be securely fastened and snug each time you ride.

Remember, after taking a serious hit, helmets lose their ability to absorb shock. If you ever have a fall and hit any surface with the helmet, immediately replace the helmet.

OTHER GEAR

Your bicycle- Your bike must fit just as comfortably as your helmet. While sitting on the bike, you should be able to fully extend your legs to reach the pedals when they are in the lowest position. When standing astride the bar with your feet flat on either side, there should be about 1 to 2 inches of space between your crotch and the crossbar for a road bike, and 3 to 4 inches for a mountain bike. This will give you room to jump up off the seat in case of potholes, rocks or other obstacles.

Remember that mountain bikes, with their rugged tires, are better for hillside trails, and road bikes are better for moving fast on paved surfaces.

Your skateboard- Make sure all of the parts are in working order. Check the deck, trucks and wheels for cracks, sharp edges and damaged or loose parts before use.

Remember that big boards with knobby tires are better for mountain boarding. Smaller boards are better for use in skate parks and similar environments.

Your inline skates- Choose a sturdy pair of skates with plenty of ankle support. Feel the plastic of the boot. If you can squeeze it, the material may not be strong enough. Make sure the wheels and brakes are in good condition and are tightly secured. If the wheels or brakes are misshapen or worn, replace them right away. Make sure the buckles are also in good condition. Always buckle the skates and keep them snug when in use.

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SHOES, PADS AND OTHER GEAR

Shoes- Bike riders should wear shoes that grip the pedals. When riding a bike, make sure your laces will not get caught in the chain.

Sturdy sneakers are important for skateboarding – both to protect your feet, and to ensure the sneakers survive the constant scrapes and hits that come with the sport.

Pads- Skateboarders and inline skaters should wear knee pads, elbow pads and wrist guards. Knee pads and elbow pads should have a cushioned interior with a hard plastic shell to protect against scrapes. Wrist guards should be made from rigid plastic that holds the wrist securely in the event of a fall. All pads should fit properly and be securely fastened at all times.

Other gear- Bike riders should wear fluorescent and bright-colored clothes for maximum visibility, even during the daytime. To avoid becoming overheated, bike riders should wear lightweight clothes, especially during the summer, and should keep a full water bottle on the bike.

Riding gloves can protect a bike-rider's hands, especially while mountain biking. Skaters may want to wear long pants, long-sleeve shirts, and light gloves for extra protection against scrapes and cuts.

WHEN CYCLING, FOLLOW THE RULES OF THE ROAD

Always ride your bike on the right side of the street, in the same direction as traffic. **Never ride against traffic.** Use bike lanes or designated bike routes whenever possible. Remember that in some areas it is illegal to ride on the sidewalk. Stop at all stop signs and obey traffic lights just as cars do. Take special care at intersections. Walk your bike across busy intersections using the crosswalk and following traffic signals.

Never change direction or change lanes without first looking behind you and using the correct hand signals. Use your left arm for all hand signals. To indicate a left turn, hold your arm straight out to the left. For a right turn, bend your elbow, holding your arm up in an "L" shape. Before you stop, bend your elbow to point your arm downward in an upside-down "L" shape.

If you ride when it's dark, be sure to have reflectors on your bike and a battery-powered headlight.

Remember that some drivers just do not see cyclists. Always stop and check for traffic in both directions when entering the road. Watch for turning cars, or cars pulling out of driveways. Be careful around parked cars because their doors may open suddenly and unexpectedly.

SKATEBOARDING AND INLINE SKATING-GETTING STARTED

Skateboarding and inline skating can be tricky for beginners. In fact, one-third of all skateboarding injuries happen to those who have been skateboarding for less than a week.

Consider taking lessons from a trained instructor or an experienced skater before skating on your own. Learn how to turn, control speed, stop, and skate with your head up in order to recognize and avoid obstacles and other people.

Learn how to fall properly, in order to reduce the risk of injury. Try to land on the fleshy parts of your body and roll, rather than breaking a fall with your arms and hands. Practice falling on grass or a gym mat, so you will be ready for the real thing.

When skateboarding, remember that bigger tricks, ramps, and other features create the risk for bigger injuries. Once you have learned a couple of tricks, practice until you know them inside and out before taking on something more complicated.

Whether skateboarding or inline skating, always have a realistic understanding of your own skill level. Do not attempt any advanced tricks or ride or skate on challenging landscapes unless you are sure you can handle more demanding terrain without getting seriously hurt.

WHERE TO SKATE

When skateboarding or inline skating, especially if you are a beginner, make sure the area you use is free of rocks, broken glass, holes and other potential hazards. Your very first rides should be in an area free of obstacles and other people, such as an empty parking lot or unused tennis court. Many skate parks have areas set aside for beginners. Be sure to know and obey all of the rules governing use of the skate park.

It is vital that you learn skate-park etiquette, especially before venturing into the park's more advanced features. For example, waiting your turn instead of jumping blindly into the bowl will help prevent collisions with other skaters.

If you are mountain-boarding or inline skating on trails, be sure to inspect the trail before riding and look for hazards like fallen branches.

Avoid sidewalks and roads as much as possible. Cars are the greatest threat to skaters. A collision can be fatal. **Never skate in traffic.** Be courteous to pedestrians, bicyclists, and anyone else you may encounter. If you must cross the street, use a crosswalk – and get off your skateboard.

BE AWARE WHILE CYCLING OR SKATING

Be aware of your surroundings at all times. Know where other skaters, pedestrians, bicyclists, and joggers are, and give them plenty of space to avoid collisions.

Stay on the right when cycling, or when skating on paths and trails. If cycling with friends, ride single file. If you are going to pass another cyclist or skater, do so on the left and let them know by calling out, "On your left!" Only pass when it is safe and when there is room enough for you and the other person.

Be sure to keep an eye out for stationary obstacles such as potholes, gravel, wet leaves, and other potential hazards. Watch for changing conditions due to weather.

Never get towed behind a moving car, bike or other vehicle.

Finally, never cycle or skate while wearing headphones. Listening to music is a distraction that can be very dangerous.