



GO BY B KE!

A Parent's Guide to Bike Safety

Bicycling is fun, it helps us keep fit, and it gives us mobility. For kids, the bicycle is their first vehicle, a source of pride — and an important way to get around. In addition, bicycling is generally a safe activity. But, when bicyclists make basic mistakes, they're the ones most likely to get hurt.

For this reason, the attitudes you instill in your child now will determine how he or she will ride for years to come. If your child gets a good grounding in safe riding techniques, he or she will be able to enjoy the benefits of bicycling for many years.

FIVE COMMON BICYCLING MYTHS

The following myths can lead to big problems for young riders:

MYTH #1: "BICYCLISTS SHOULD RIDE FACING TRAFFIC."

At intersections, few drivers look for traffic coming the wrong way. Ride where folks will expect you!

MYTH #2: "A CHILD NEEDS A BIKE TO GROW INTO."

Wrong. On a big bike, kids wobble and weave down the road.

MYTH #3: "MY CHILD NEEDS A 21-SPEED MOUNTAIN BIKE."

Probably not. Leave the fancy bike for later.

MYTH #4: "OUR NEIGHBORHOOD IS QUIET, SO WE DON'T HAVE TO WORRY."

Many bike crashes involving children happen on quiet two-lane residential streets with 25 mph speed limits — largely because that's where kids bicycle.

MYTH #5: "BIKING JUST ISN'T SAFE".

Statistics show that people who bike live longer, healthier lives.



HOW OLD IS OLD ENOUGH?

Before the age of 10, few kids understand how traffic works. Children have trouble judging speed and distance. They can't locate sounds — like a car's engine or a siren — very well. They think that, if they can see a car, the driver can see them. They can certainly be taught skills and rules, but may have trouble with confusing traffic situations.

SOME RULES FOR YOUNG BIKERS

- 1 No playing in the road.
- 2 No riding on busy streets.
- 3 No riding at night.
- 4 Stop for all stop signs.
- 5 Ride on the right, with traffic.
- 6 Make your own decisions.
- 7 Always wear your bike helmet.

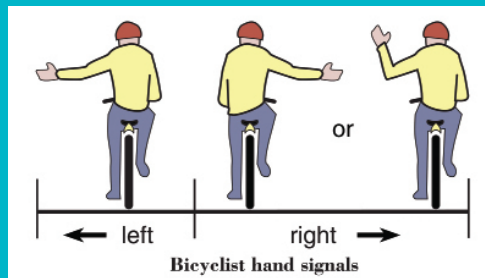


SERIOUS CRASHES ARE RARE

It's important to teach your child how to bicycle safely and avoid crashes. But serious bicycling crashes are rare, and the "heart healthy" benefits of bicycling far outweigh the risks. America's childhood obesity epidemic will kill many times more kids than bicycling will. By teaching your child safe bicycling, you not only help prevent crashes, but you start him or her on the path to an active and fun life. And by bicycling with your child, you, too, can benefit from the exercise.

For more bike education opportunities, contact MassBike (617-542-2453) or your local bike organization.

DO YOU KNOW YOUR SIGNALS?



WHAT ABOUT HELMETS?

Your child should use one every time he or she rides. About 75% of all bicyclists killed each year die from head injuries. Many more are injured seriously. Go with a "CPSC-approved" helmet; there are many available in different styles and colors.

THREE IMPORTANT TIPS

- 1 Let your child pick out his or her helmet.
- 2 Follow the helmet instructions for a proper fit.
- 3 Wear one yourself!

IMPORTANT BIKE SKILLS

- SKILL 1 Always watching for car traffic.
- SKILL 2 Riding in a straight line.
- SKILL 3 Looking back without swerving.
- SKILL 4 Stopping and controlling your speed.



Massachusetts
Bicycle Coalition
617-542-2453
www.MassBike.org