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Orange County Fire Authority

# Helmet Safety

## Helmet Facts

Bike helmets reduce head injuries by 85% and brain injuries by 88%.

Helmets for children usually last 1-2 years.

Always replace a helmet after a crash.

Make sure your helmet is CPSC (Consumer Product Safety Commission) certified.

75% of bike-related deaths could have been prevented with a helmet.

For extra protection look for ASTM F-1492 (heavy duty) labeled helmets.

A child is more likely to wear a helmet if he or she picks it out.

**In 1997, 813 bicyclists were killed in crashes, an increase of 7% from the previous year. Of those, 97% were not wearing helmets.**

The Heroes Wear Helmets program was conceived in response to two local children who sustained major head injuries due to the lack of protective helmets. Both incidents were skateboard-related and the severity of the injuries could have been significantly reduced if proper head protection was worn.

**Goal:** Deliver the message, on a nationwide basis that it is cool and smart to wear a helmet during high impact sports, and that you may receive a gift certificate to a local restaurant. Another goal is to demonstrate to the community that the Heroes Wear Helmets program is working in conjunction with local businesses and emergency services in keeping the community's children safe.

## Bicycle Facts

More kids ages 5 to 14 go to the hospital emergency departments with injuries related to biking than with any other sport.

Each year, about 567,000 people go to hospital emergency departments with bicycle-related injuries; about 350,000 of those injured are children under 15 years old. Of those children, about 130,000 sustain brain injuries.

Each year, bicycle – related crashes kill about 900 people; about 200 of those killed are children under 15 years old.

70% to 80% of all fatal bicycle crashes involve brain injuries.

90% of bicycle – related deaths involve collisions with motor vehicles.

## How Children See Traffic

- Have a narrower field of vision than adults, about 1/3 less.
- Cannot easily judge a car's speed and distance.
- Cannot readily tell the direction a sound is coming from.
- May be impatient and impulsive.
- Have a limited sense of danger.
- Imitate the (often bad) behavior of others, especially adults.
- Often mix fantasy with reality.
- Assume that if they can see a car, its driver must be able to see them. However, children are easily hidden from view by parked cars and other objects.
- Concentrate on only one thing at a time

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## Buy the Correct Helmet

### Tricycle Helmets

- Cover the whole head.
- Designed for kids who often fall sideways and backward.

### Extra Small Bike Helmets

- Designed for kids who are learning to ride two-wheelers.
- Still covers sides and back of the head.
- Cut-away sides allow better peripheral vision.

### Bike Helmets

- Need a snug fit.
- Protect the forehead and back of the head.
- Most will last 2 summers when properly cared for.

### Wear it Right

- Center helmet on the top of the head so it covers the forehead and eyebrows.
- Keep straps buckled all the time.
- Check straps often as they work loose with use.
- Adjust pads so helmet stays put when tugged slightly side to side or forward and back.
- Replace all helmets following a fall as the internal foam may be compressed without appearing damaged.

### Need More Gear?

To skate, skateboard or scooter add:

- Wrist guards
- Elbow pads
- Knee pads

## Ten ways to help children become better cyclists:

1. Give your child only as much independence and responsibility as he or she can handle safely. Throughout childhood, children slowly develop the cognitive, perceptual and sensory skills necessary to be safe in traffic.
2. Remember that each child is unique. Do not base rules for one child on those for siblings, cousins or neighbors. Children of the same age may require different levels of supervision in traffic.
3. Evaluate children's behavior in traffic. Are they impulsive? Do they stop to think before acting? Can they sustain attention on something important? Are they risk takers? It is likely that your child's behavior in traffic will resemble behavior out of traffic.
4. Consider any limitations your child has and how these might influence his or her behavior in traffic. For example, does your child have a vision problem? Hearing impairment? Cognitive or judgment limitations?
5. Give your child practice in traffic. Frequent supervised experiences can help children develop good traffic safety habits.
6. Teach your child the rules of walking and bicycling safety as you encounter traffic situations. Ask your children to repeat rules back to you.
7. Do not assume your child will follow the rules just because he or she can verbalize them. Let your child lead you in traffic to help you assess how well he or she follows the rules. Set up situations in which you shadow your child (walk 10 -15 feet behind) to allow semi-independence.
8. Grant independence in small steps to see how your child handles it. For example, let your child progress from playing in front of the house to playing on the block, to walking around the block, to crossing one street, etc.
9. Always model appropriate traffic safety practices yourself, whether you are walking, bicycling or driving! Children learn from important people around them.
10. Be a careful driver, and watch for children who may not yet have developed good traffic safety habits. Their safety is in your hands.

Additional information can be found on the following websites:

[www.hwysafety.org](http://www.hwysafety.org)  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)  
[www.bhsi.org](http://www.bhsi.org)  
[www.mdpublichealth.org](http://www.mdpublichealth.org)