



HARBORVIEW
INJURY PREVENTION
& RESEARCH CENTER

UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

Bike Helmet Safety

Bicycle helmets have been shown to reduce riders' risk of traumatic brain injuries (TBI) by 88 percent, and laws requiring use have boosted the numbers of bikers wearing helmets. Head injuries account for about two-thirds of hospitalizations and about 75 percent of deaths in U.S. bicycle crashes.

To further prevent some of these injuries, several states have created separate licenses and safety courses; Seattle has created separate bike lanes and traffic lights on some roadways.

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Pick the right helmet

Start with the right size. To find out the size of your head, wrap a soft tape measure around your head, just above your eyebrows and ears. Make sure the tape measure stays level front to back.

Get a good fit.

- *Coverage:* A bike helmet should not sit too high or low on the rider's head. Make sure the bottom of the pad inside the front of the helmet is one or two finger widths above the bike rider's eyebrows.
- *Side straps:* The side straps should make a "V" shape under, and slightly in front of the bike rider's ears.
- *Chin straps:* The chin strap should be centered under the bike rider's chin and fit snugly so that no more than one or two fingers fit between the chin and the strap. Once the chin strap is fastened, the helmet should not move in any direction, back-to-front or side-to-side.

Vision. Make sure that you can see forward and side-to-side.

Bike helmet labels matter. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) certified label means that the helmet has been tested for safety and meets the federal safety standard.

ASTM, Snell, or ANSI certified. These labels let you know that the helmet has also passed the safety tests of these organizations.

Pick the right route

- Find a bicycle route that is separated from traffic.
- Use King County's Regional Trails System (RTS) map to find a map of non-motorized recreation and commuting routes. Map at: www.kingcounty.gov/services/parks-recreation/parks/trails/regional-trails.aspx/
- Learn the rules of the road. Visit www.wsdot.wa.gov/travel/commute-choices/bike/safety/ for safety tips for biking in Washington.

hiprc.org/bicycle-safety