

Biking Equipment

The enjoyment and safety of bike riding is enhanced when you have proper equipment. Following are suggestions.

Helmets

They are an absolute necessity! This is true for both kids and adults. When shopping for a helmet, make sure that the helmet is certified for bike riding by looking inside for a stamp from Snell Foundation, ANSI, or ASTM. When purchasing a helmet, be sure that it fits properly. When the helmet is strapped on your head, it should not slide or move. To test it, shake your head. There should not be any play between your head and the padding. Also, you should not be able to put your hand in the front and pull or peel the helmet off. To test the chin strap, open your mouth wide. If the strap is fitted properly, your jaw bone should be pulling the strap and helmet down on your head. After being properly fitted, the helmet should sit level on your head. Keep it that way! Do not tilt it back on your head. The price of helmets varies. Higher priced helmets are lighter weight, have better ventilation and more style. Some of the better helmets have a system on the back that cups the back of the head and makes it secure. When looking for a helmet, look for comfort and ventilation.

Lights

You must have a headlight in the front and a reflector on the back of your bike if you use it between sunset and sunrise. All bikes sold in the last 10 years, by federal law, require you to have 10 reflectors – two in each pedal, two on each wheel, one toward the front and one toward the back. You must keep the reflectors and light clean, in good working order, and replace any that have broken.

Bikes

There are three types of bikes on the market – road, off-road/mountain, and cross or hybrid.

Road Bikes Road bikes are only good on hard surface roads. They are not practical on dirt roads. They have a drop or down-turned handlebar and smaller, more narrow seats. They also have a narrow tire that you must use only on hard surfaces. Road bikes are more streamline and aerodynamic. They will go fast, but they won't take a lot of abuse or rough riding.

Mountain Bikes Off - Road or Mountain Bikes represent 65% of total bike sales. They are the most popular bikes now. Many people use them on the road because they give you an upright style handlebar and a wider seat. These bikes have wide, low-pressure tires. It's a more comfortable ride provided you are not on a long distance ride. Most people prefer the wider seat and the wider tires as these features cushion the ride. The off-road/mountain bikes can be purchased with either front suspension or full suspension for the rough terrain enthusiast.

Hybrid Bikes Hybrid cross bikes are a combination of the two above-mentioned bikes. They are practical for recreational riding. They can be used for off-road, dirt road or packed dirt trail as well as on the road. These bikes have a wider seat (than the road bike) and use the same type of handlebar as the off-road/mountain bike.

Fitting a bike to the individual is extremely important. On a road bike you want to stand flat footed on the ground and straddle over the top tube of the frame. You want a one to two inch clearance. On a mountain bike, you need an increased clearance - three inches. On a hybrid, you need approximately two inches of clearance. Parents should be careful when sizing a bike for their child. Many children are riding bikes too large for them and this can be very dangerous. You need a certain amount of clearance at any age. You should NOT buy a bike that "your child can grow into!"

To properly set the seat height, do the following: Put the ball of your foot on the peddle at the bottom position level parallels to the ground, your leg should be slight bent. You don't want to be sitting on a seat that is too low and be flat footed on the ground. You want to touch the balls of your feet.

Gloves

Gloves serve two purposes. On longer rides numbness can occur in your arm. The best gloves have a gel padding giving them more comfort. That helps to eliminate numbness. Also, gloves protect your hand in the event of a fall. They can help avoid abrasions to your hands.

Additional Help

For additional help in selecting the right bike and safety equipment for you and your family members, visit a local bike shop staffed by knowledgeable staff who know their job and cycling.