

# Pointers For Parents

## Emergency Department Nurses Offer Bike and Helmet Safety Tips

(NAPSA)—Bicycling—one of the joys of childhood—is also a leading cause of visits to hospital emergency departments for kids ages 5 to 14, according to the Emergency Nurses Association. To help your kids cycle safely, start at the top, ENA advises, by insisting they always wear a helmet.

“Helmets won’t prevent bike crashes, but they can prevent permanent brain injury and even save a child’s life,” explained Barbara Foley, Director, Emergency Nurses CARE (EN CARE), the Injury Prevention Institute of ENA. In fact, experts estimate that universal bicycle helmet use by children would prevent 39,000 to 45,000 head injuries and 18,000 to 55,000 scalp and face injuries annually. Yet only about 20 percent of bicyclists in the United States today wear helmets.

“Most bicycle fatalities involve head injuries,” Foley said. “The fact is—helmets are more than 85 percent effective in preventing head and brain injuries, so it’s tremendously important to wear a helmet and make sure it fits properly,” she added.

In 2000, 738 bicyclists were killed and more than 50,000 injured in crashes with motor vehicles. Nearly one-third of those killed were children ages 15 and under.

“Emergency nurses see the devastating effects of preventable injuries every day in hospitals across the country—and that’s why we are committed to trying to make a difference,” Foley said.

Foley noted that a bike helmet habit learned early in life is more likely to carry over into teen and adult years, so kids should wear a helmet beginning with their first bike ride. Parents should set a good example by wearing a helmet



as well. She added that young bicyclists, ages 14 and under, are at five times greater risk for injury than older cyclists.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety notes bicycle deaths are most likely to occur on Fridays and Saturdays in the summer. Peak hours for bike-related fatalities are 3-9 p.m.

The Emergency Nurses Association offers the following tips to help kids cycle safely:

- Select a helmet that fits snugly and sits flat on the head.
- Check to see that the helmet has been tested and meets the uniform safety standard (CPSC and ASTM or Snell).
- Replace any helmet that has been in a crash or after five years.
- Begin the “helmet habit” with a child’s first bike ride.
- Encourage other parents to insist on helmets.
- Allow children to choose their own helmet color, design and shape.
- Buy a bike that is the right size, not one to grow into.
- Bicycles are considered vehicles, so obey all traffic laws.
- Avoid riding at night.

For more information about bicycle and helmet safety, visit the Emergency Nurses Association Web site, [www.ena.org](http://www.ena.org).