



## 5 Smart Ways to Enjoy Safe Bike Rides

Biking is a fun (and very healthy) way to get to school, work, or somewhere scenic. Wherever you bike, safety should always be at the top of your checklist. Here are five very important items to check before you take a bike out on a street or trail. Some need to be checked once a season; others are important every time you get on a bike.

### **1. Check the ABCs - air, brakes, and chain.**

To ensure a bike is road (or trail) worthy, it needs a complete tune-up at least once a year. Use a reputable bike shop or learn to do-it-yourself at a bike clinic. A quick check of air, brakes, and chain never hurts, especially on older bikes or when you ride on dirty surfaces. Check to see that tires are inflated, brakes are clean, and the chain is free of debris and turning freely.

### **2. Check the seat height.**

When a bike is at the wrong height for your body, it can be uncomfortable and dangerous. To see if the seat is the right height for you, sit on the bike while standing still. Make certain that the tips of your toes (and nothing else) touches the ground on both sides of the bike. At the same time, check to see that the handlebars are also at a comfortable height for you.

### **3. Check helmet fit.**

Wearing a helmet on a bike is just as important as wearing a seat belt in the car. Bike helmets, like seat belt use, are also the law in some places. Unfortunately, many people wear helmets that do not fit well and therefore cannot protect their heads in an accident. To get a proper fit, go to a bike shop, a bike safety clinic, or online to search for written or video instructions.

### **4. Check shoes and clothing.**

Biking in flip-flops, high heels, or soft, dressy shoes is never a smart idea. Wear flat-soled shoes that fit snugly and have no dangling pieces that could become caught in the chain or spokes. Use elastics or ties to hold back long pants or longer skirts. Reflective clothing and backpacks (as well as bike lights) are important accessories, especially when light is low.

### **5. Check traffic continuously.**

Every cyclist has a duty to know the rules of the road, both as they apply to bike riders and as they relate to other drivers as well. It is important to use common sense when riding on any street or trail and to always watch what other two- and four-wheeled vehicles are doing. Many communities have bike rodeos, classes, or clinics to help children learn to ride safely.