

BICYCLE HELMET SAFETY EDUCATION IN THE EARLY YEARS



Most young children love getting out and about on wheels; tricycles, bicycles and scooters. It is a great activity for physical fitness, developing gross motor skills, spatial awareness and learning road safety skills.

Research shows that wearing a bicycle helmet significantly reduces the risk of moderate, serious and severe head injury by up to 74 per cent¹. Children under 12 can ride bikes and scooters on footpaths, bike paths and parks but must wear an Australian Standards approved bicycle helmet when riding on roads, bike paths, bike lanes, shared and separated footpaths, recreational parks and car parks.

Unfortunately research also reveals up to 47 per cent of children between the ages of 0 to 12 years are not wearing helmets when riding bicycles at times of collision².

These statistics highlight a need to raise awareness in the community about the safety benefits of wearing bicycle helmets from a young age.

Research shows that wearing a bicycle helmet significantly reduces the risk of moderate, serious and severe head injury by up to 74 per cent¹. Children under 12 can ride bikes and scooters on footpaths, bike paths and parks but must wear an Australian Standards approved bicycle helmet when riding in a public space.

October is *Safe Cycle Month*; a road safety initiative which aims to reduce the incidence and severity of bicycle collisions by raising awareness of cycling safety issues in the community.

VicRoads, with support from Victoria Police, ELAA and Bicycle Network has introduced Bicycle Helmet Education Packs which have been launched this October as part of Safe Cycle Month.

The bicycle helmet education pack has been designed to help support the education of children and families about the importance of wearing correctly fitted bicycle helmets. Each pack contains three demonstration helmets, helmet prints with discussion points on the back to introduce helmet safety to children, families and staff and information flyers for parents and carers.

Educators will be able to borrow the packs from 22 police stations around Victoria from October. Go to www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/helmets for information on participating police stations or to download the information tip sheets.

Common questions about using bicycle helmets

When should children wear a helmet?

Children should always wear a helmet when using wheeled items like tricycles, bicycles, scooters, when travelling on the back of an adult's bike or in a bike trailer. It is important to wear a helmet whether in the street, in the driveway, a paved area or on a footpath.

Is there a connection between sharing hats/helmets and head lice?

Studies have shown that head lice need certain environments to stay alive and helmets do not provide that environment. There is little risk of cross infection via hats.³

How do I correctly fit a helmet?

Place your hands on top of the helmet and try to move it.



It should not be possible to tilt the helmet:

- forwards to cover the eyes
- Backwards to uncover the forehead
- Sideways to uncover the side of the head.

When the helmet is fastened it should be squarely positioned on the head. The rim of the helmet should sit on the forehead just above the eyebrows. The straps should be adjusted so that there is no slack when the buckle is securely fastened under the chin. Ensure straps are not twisted and that the side straps form a V shape with the point just under the ear lobe.

1 Bambach, M. R., Mitchell, R. J., Grzebieta, R. H., Olivier, J. The effectiveness of helmets in bicycle collisions with motor vehicles: A case-control study. *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, Issue 53, 2013

2 Ibid

3 Speare, R et al, Hard data needed on head lice transmission. *International Journal of Dermatology* 2000 39 877-878

Practice example

The children at Dawson Street Childcare Co-op have access to four bicycles each day and are involved in getting them out of the storage shed, ready for play. Each bicycle is numbered and children 'drive' them to their prescribed parking bay ready to be taken by children and 'driven' around the concrete path. Their educators have constructed the building blocks of many teaching and learning opportunities for road safety education. The educators have, over the year, added seatbelts and helmets and assisted children to make traffic lights at various points on the path.

This type of ongoing and open ended curriculum decision making allows for educators to make intentional decisions to teach children about specific elements of road safety (e.g. seatbelts) and to take children's lead when ideas arise. For example, children may notice that people do not look out for them on the path and therefore may want to make a set of traffic lights.

