

FACT SHEET:

bicycle safety



Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Australia

Every day in Queensland, up to six* children under 18 are treated in an emergency department for a bicycle-related injury.^{1,2}

Each week, three children under 14 are admitted to hospital for one day or more because of a bicycle-related injury.³

The risks^{1,2}

- Most bicycle injuries happen to boys.
- Half of the bicycle injuries to children in Queensland occur in the 10-15 age group, but children from seven to nine are still at risk (20% of bicycle injuries).
- Two-thirds of bicycle injuries in children occur on the street or at home. Children under nine are most likely to be injured riding a bicycle around the home.

Injuries^{1,2,3}

- The most frequent bicycle-related injuries are broken bones, open wounds, bruises, abrasions and grazes.
- The forearm is the most commonly injured body part in children over seven.
- The head, face and neck are the most commonly injured part of the body in children under six.
- Injuries to the wrist, hand, knee, lower leg, ankle and foot are also common injuries, as is a head (perhaps brain) injury, which can be very serious.
- Almost a quarter of injuries resulting in hospitalisation in Australia are to the head.⁴
- Death from a bike crash is most likely to be from a brain injury.

Prevention

- It is compulsory to wear a helmet which complies with Australian standards (AS/NZ 2063), even if not riding on the road. Ensure it fits properly and is worn correctly. *See the fact sheet on helmets.*
- Make sure the bike fits, and is appropriate, for your child's capabilities. A bike that is too big or too small is a hazard. At least the toes should touch the ground when sitting on the saddle.
- Ensure bikes are fitted with safety devices such as lights, reflectors, bell or horn, chain guards and bike lights for older children riding at dusk or at night.
- Children under 10 should cycle with responsible adults. They do not have the skills to cycle safely on the road.
- Cyclists should wear bright-coloured clothing or a visibility vest and fully-enclosed footwear.⁵
- Teach your children the basics of stopping and speed control in a supervised setting.
- Ensure children are taught the rules of the road for safe cycling before cycling unsupervised.

- Children should be taught that driveways are dangerous and a safety risk.
- For young cyclists, a footpath or shared bikepath is the best place to cycle unless signed otherwise – but be careful crossing driveways.
- Children should walk their bikes when crossing the street or railway crossings. Teach them to stop, look in all directions, listen and think before crossing.

Bicycle checklist

- ✓ **BRAKES:** Ensure brake blocks are not worn down and are fitted correctly (Foot brake should be effective.)
- ✓ **CHAIN:** Should be frequently oiled and not loose.
- ✓ **TYRES:** Look for bald spots, bulges and cuts. They should not 'squash' when firmly squeezed.
- ✓ **PEDALS:** Must spin freely.
- ✓ **SEAT:** Should be the right height for the rider.
- ✓ **REFLECTORS and LIGHTS:** Should be secure, properly aligned, clean and working.
- ✓ **BELL or HORN:** Working properly, loud enough for others to hear.
- ✓ **HAND GRIPS:** Should be covering the handles and the ends (these commonly wear away).⁶
- ✓ **WHEEL NUTS:** Should always be tight.
- ✓ **STEERING HEAD:** Should not be loose.

* Figure extrapolated from Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit data.

Sources

1. McKenzie K, Scott D, Limbong J, & Li E. 2011., Feasibility Of Using Health Data Sources To Inform Product Safety Surveillance In Queensland. National Centre for Health Information Research and Training, Faculty of Health, Queensland University of Technology.
2. Scott D, Hockey R, Barker R, & Pitt R. 2005. QISU Bulletin 86 – Bicycle Injury in Queensland.
3. Queensland Trauma Review. Cyclists. June 2010. Queensland Trauma Registry. Centre of National Research on Rehabilitation and Disability Medicine. University of Queensland.
4. Bradley C and Harrison J 2008. Hospital separations due to injury and poisoning, Australia 2004-05. Injury Research and Statistics Series Number 47. (Cat.no. INJCAT 117) Adelaide: AIHW.
5. Thornley SJ, Woodward A, Langley JD 2008. Conspicuity and bicycle crashes: preliminary findings of the Taupo bicycle study.
6. Acton CH, Thomas S, Clark R. 1994. Bicycle Incidents in Children: abdominal trauma and handlebars. MedJ Aust 1994.

See also

Queensland Transport, *Safe Cycling*:
transport.qld.gov.au/qt/LTASinfo.nsf/index/cycling_safe
Australian Bicycle Council: abc.dotars.gov.au
Our Brisbane, Active and Healthy, Cycling:
ourbrisbane.com/activeandhealthy/sport/track/cycling
Brisbane Bicycle Touring Association: bbta.org/index.php
Bicycle Federation of Australia: bfa.asn.au/default.htm
Bicycle Queensland: bq.org.au

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