

FACT SHEET:

bicycles+passengers



Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Australia

Every day in Queensland two children under 18 attend an emergency room for bicycle injuries.¹

The majority of bicycle injuries are falls.¹

Riding with children as passengers

Kids' bike seats, trailers and tag-alongs that attach to a parent's bike provide easy transportation of a young child while parents enjoy the benefits of cycling.

When is my child ready?

The baby's neck and back must be strong enough to support their head and the extra weight of a helmet while riding. They must also be able to cope with the additional forces experienced when speeding up, slowing down and bouncing over bumps or potholes.

Kidsafe does not recommend taking a child under 12 months on a bike or in a bike trailer.

By law, your child must wear a properly fitted, Standards Approved helmet when on a bike seat or in a trailer, including a tag-along.

The helmet must not force the child into an uncomfortable position. If the helmet forces the child's head forward, they may be too young. *See the bicycle helmets factsheet.*

The risks

- A seat carried on the back of a bicycle adds instability (wobbliness) to the bike. This increases with the weight of the child.
- The bike may tip up on hills due to the extra weight over the back wheel.
- A trailer adds extra length, so corners are more difficult to negotiate.
- It is difficult to observe the child, except on crossbar-mounted (front), seats.
- Feet getting caught in spokes or (in case of tag-alongs), pedals.

Be a role model: Set a good example when cycling with your children. Make sure that your bicycle meets all the safety requirements and that you wear a helmet, enclosed shoes and bright clothing.

Injuries¹

The majority of bicycle injuries are broken bones followed by cuts, bruises, grazes and abrasions. The head, face and neck are the most commonly injured parts of the body in children under six years.

Prevention

- Ensure the seat or trailer is securely fixed to the bike before putting the child into the seat. If in doubt, get a bike shop to install the carrier.

- Make sure the bike is stable before putting the child in or when taking them out of a rear or front-mounted seat.
- Never leave a child unattended in a bicycle-mounted child seat.
- Only allow a competent adult cyclist take a child as a passenger due to the instability the bicycle-mounted seat and movement of the child.
- A crossbar-mounted seat is more stable for the adult cyclist and allows proximity to engage with the child.
- Make sure the child wears a properly fitted helmet and five-point harness at all times.
- Ensure the child seat offers leg protection from moving parts.
- Ride conservatively to take account of the longer braking distances and reduced manoeuvrability due to the extra weight.
- A trailer should have a high flag visible to car drivers.
- When towing a trailer allow for the extended length and take extreme care when crossing roads. *NOTE:* in busy areas, the trailer may not be visible to other cyclists or motorists.
- Test ride before cycling in busy areas and make sure you have full control of the bike and child before riding in public areas.
- Do *not* use a baby backpack or sling while riding as these are less stable and the child has no protection in a crash.
- Bike seats, carriers and helmets must meet Australian Standards.
- Ensure the adult bike is fitted with safety devices such as lights, reflectors, bell or horn.

Sources

1. McKenzie et al. (2011), Feasibility Of Using Health Data Sources To Inform Product Safety Surveillance In Queensland.

Useful sites:

Bicycle Network Victoria

www.bv.com.au/general/bikes-and-riding/41629/

Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute

<http://www.helmets.org/index.htm>

Mamabike

<http://www.mamabike.com.au>

Choice

<http://www.choice.com.au/reviews-and-tests/babies-and-kids/kids-bikes/bikes/bike-child-seats-and-trailers-review-and-compare.aspx>

© Kidsafe Queensland 2012 – kidsafeqld.com.au