



# MID-JERSEY PEDIATRICS

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## BIKE HELMETS

Wearing a bike helmet greatly reduces the risk of serious head injury in a bicycle accident. Every child, adolescent, and adult should wear a helmet **every** time he or she rides a bike or scooter, rollerblades or skateboards. If a child begins wearing a helmet as soon as she begins using a tricycle or Big Wheel, helmet wear will be a habit by the time she's ready for a two-wheeler. To get an older child who is accustomed to riding a bike without a helmet to use head protection is more difficult. Begin by being firm about enforcing a "no helmet, no ride" rule. If the child is afraid of being embarrassed show him/her biking magazines with their glossy pictures of "cool" bikers wearing helmets. Talk with other parents about the importance of wearing a helmet; if your child's friends must abide by the same rules as yours, no child will worry about being ridiculed for wearing a helmet.

You can purchase a helmet from a toy or bike store or mass merchandiser. Prices range from \$10 to \$100. The most expensive helmets do not necessarily have the best protection against head injury, and most helmets, including inexpensive ones, exceed the safety standards of the Snell Memorial Foundation and the American National Standards Institute. The Snell standards are tougher, however, so to get the best protection, select a helmet that is Snell Certified.

Here's how to choose the right bike helmet for your child:

- Use a tape measure to determine the circumference of your child's head at its broadest point – usually across the middle of the forehead and around the most prominent point in the back of the head.
- Select the helmet size that corresponds to your child's head circumference measurement. Most helmets fit a range of head sizes, which is clearly marked on the box.
- Have your child try on the helmet, making sure that the front sits down over the middle of the forehead to protect the head adequately. Most helmets come with foam pads of varying thickness; they can be used to make the helmet fit snugly but not tightly over the head.
- Adjust the chin-strap so it fits securely, but not tightly. You should be able to slip two fingers under the strap when it is fastened, but the helmet should not rock back and forth on the head.
- To ensure that the child will wear the helmet consistently, make certain it is comfortable. The helmet should not be too heavy and needs to be well ventilated so the child won't feel hot.
- Make sure your child likes the helmet. There are enough colors and styles to suit a variety of tastes. Let the child take the lead in picking something that looks good to him.

Remember, your child's safety is your responsibility. Enforce the helmet rule firmly and feel proud when you hear your child say, "My parents make me wear helmet."