

## The First Thing to Look For

You should buy only a helmet that meets the bicycle helmet safety standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) or the Snell Memorial Foundation.

These standards are not mandatory, so all helmets don't meet them. All helmets meeting these standards are labeled. Check inside and buy only those with one of these labels.

The essential part of the helmet for impact protection is a thick layer of firm polystyrene, plastic foam, that crushes on impact, absorbing the force of the blow. Hard-shell helmets also have a hard outer shell of plastic or fiberglass that provides a shield against penetration by sharp objects and holds the polystyrene together if it cracks in a fall or crash. Soft-shell helmets have no hard outer shell but are made of an extra-thick layer of polystyrene covered with a cloth cover or surface coating. The cloth cover is an essential part of many soft-shell helmets. If the helmet comes with a cover, the cover must always be worn to hold the helmet together if polystyrene cracks on impact. The soft-shell helmets are lighter than the hard-shelled version but may be less durable.

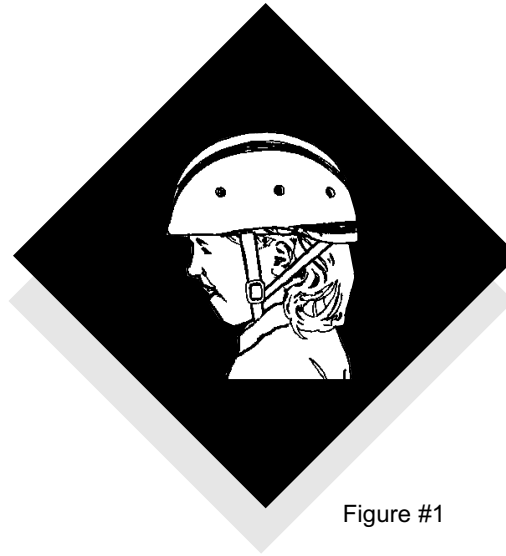


Figure #1

### Proper Fit

Proper fit is always of utmost importance. A helmet should be worn squarely on the top of the head, covering the top of the forehead for proper protection. An adjustable retention system (usually a strap) is provided. With the helmet on, the bottom of the (Y) made by the strap junction should fall just forward of and below each ear. (See Figure 1). The chin strap should be snugly adjusted, but not uncomfortable. Adjustable pads inside the helmet are important to assure a proper fit. The helmet should not move around on the head or slide down over the eyes. Do not wear a helmet that does not fit properly. An adjustable chin strap should always be kept fastened. It should hold the helmet snugly.

### Helmets Come in Many Sizes.

Helmets are available in infant, child, youth and adults sizes. Babies less than 1 year of age have a relatively weak neck structure. Neither helmets nor bike travel is recommended for them. Most helmets have removable fitting pads that can be replaced when the child's head grows.

Helmets are available at most bicycle shops and

at some discount department and toy stores.

A multi-sport helmet is designed for skateboarding, inline skating and for scooters. This multi-sport helmet is made of a different design and construction, with the outer shell of the helmet comparable to the plastic that a football and hockey helmet is made of. You can wear a multi-sport helmet for bike riding, but you should not wear a bike helmet for skateboarding, inline skating or on scooters.

### Good Things Are Light Weight

A reflective trim is important. Excellent ventilation is to be provided.

There is only one kind of a helmet a person on a bike should wear — a bicycle helmet!

The bicycle helmet is a simple piece of equipment, so simple that it's easy to under-estimate its importance. But what could be more important than protecting a child's head from the impact of a fall? That's exactly what a helmet does. A serious head injury can cause lifelong disability, or death. Everyone riding a bicycle should always wear a proper helmet. The majority of accidents involving children don't happen with cars. They happen from falls. Falls not only occur in the street, they can also occur in the driveway, on a path or in the park — anywhere, anytime.

### How to Get Your Child To Wear It

*Helmets may take some getting used to at first. These tips may help encourage the helmet habit.*

1. **Let your child help pick out the helmet.** After all, he or she is the one who will be wearing it. Helmet straps may be difficult for younger fingers. Help your child practice until he or she can buckle them easily.
2. **Always insist your child wear the helmet.** Anyone can get hurt anywhere.

3. **When you ride together, wear your own helmet.** Your own good example can make a big difference in encouraging your child to wear one.
4. **Praise and reward each time he/she wears it.** Your youngster may feel strange at first; take away some of the discomfort with words of support.
5. **Begin the helmet habit with the first bicycle.** Then, it'll become a natural habit as your child grows.
6. **Encourage other parents to buy helmets.** Making helmets common is the best way to eliminate the discomfort of being "different."

### Taking Care of Your Helmet

1. **Be careful using paint or stickers on a helmet.** Some paints and stickers can damage your bicycle helmet. Don't use anything on it unless you are sure it's safe. Some helmets include decals that are safe to use. Bike shops may also sell bright reflective stickers.
2. **Clean it with gentle soap and warm water.** A helmet gets pretty dirty over time and it's nice to clean it up. But don't use solvents or cleansers! These can damage the helmet, even though the damage might not be visible.
3. **Treat it with respect and care.** While a helmet is made to take knocks, excessive abuse can damage it. It's best not to waste its strength by tossing it around or kicking it. This is particularly true of the new lightweight soft-shell helmets. If your child is hard on toys and equipment, consider one of the hard-shell helmets instead.

**Wearing a  
Bicycle Helmet  
can reduce your  
child's risk of  
serious injury  
by 85%**

**How  
to Choose  
a Proper  
Helmet**

Safe Kids Grand Forks is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide. Our coalition focuses on preventing accidental injury and death to children under age 14. Altru Health System is proud to serve as the lead agency for Safe Kids Grand Forks. For more information call 780-1489.

