

Cycle safe: Find the right bike helmet for your child

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Wearing a bike helmet can save the life of your young child or teenager,

but it needs to fit well to really do its job.

A well-fitting bike helmet significantly reduces the odds of serious [head injury](#) or death due to a bicycle, scooter or skateboard accident, experts say.

Children's Hospital Los Angeles offers some tips for getting a helmet that's neither too small nor too loose, while also convincing skeptical teens of the benefits.

A helmet is like a pair of jeans, the experts say. Those in the same size can fit differently, so be sure to have your [child](#) try on helmets when shopping for a new one. Buy a helmet that fits now, not one to "grow into."

Check that the helmet is certified by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), which means it has been safety tested and meets the federal safety standard.

Do not buy or accept a used helmet. It won't offer protection if it has been in a crash, and that can be hard to see, according to a hospital news release.

A good-fitting helmet is snug all around, without moving side to side or front to back on your child's head, but not so tight that it hurts. It sits level and low, but not too low. There should be room for no more than one or two finger widths above the eyebrows. The back of the helmet should not touch your child's neck.

Adjust the straps when the helmet is off. Left- and right-side straps should form a "Y" and meet right below the ear when the helmet is worn. Roll the little rubber band as close to the side straps as possible to prevent slipping.

Tighten the chin strap until it is snug and only one finger fits under the strap.

Have your child yawn while wearing the helmet. Opening the mouth wide should cause the helmet to pull down on your child's head. If it doesn't, readjust the chin strap.

Have your child look up and be sure they can see the front of the helmet visor. If not, the straps need adjustment.

Have your child shake his or her head. The helmet should not move or slip. If it does, readjust the sizing pads or universal fit ring.

Then, have your child look around and be sure he or she can see straight ahead and side to side.

Replace any helmet that has been in a crash or dropped hard on the pavement. They only protect from one impact. Check the size periodically and get a new helmet as needed or at least every five years.

More than 240,000 children and teens aged 19 and under were seen in emergency rooms for bike riding-related injuries in 2014, according to [Safe Kids Worldwide](#). Another 140,000 youth were seen for skateboard and skating injuries.

Brain injury is the most serious injury risk, with 26,000 children seen in emergency rooms each year for a [traumatic brain injury](#) related to bicycle riding.

Bike helmets reduce the risk of head injury by at least 45%, [brain injury](#) by 33%, facial injury by 27% and fatal injury by 29%.

All riders—including adults—should wear a helmet, the hospital advised.

Older teens may think they're invincible, but more than half of people aged 19 and under who were killed in bicycle-related incidents in 2014 were aged 15 to 19, nearly all boys.

When older kids and teens resist wearing a helmet, use technology as a way to help get through to them, the hospital suggests.

Parents could ask them to take out their cellphones and look at the phone case. Ask what the case is protecting and, if it makes sense to protect the computer inside your phone, why wouldn't you protect the computer inside your head?

If logic doesn't win, insist on a helmet anyway. Then model good biking safety by wearing your own helmet.

More information: The U.S.-based National Safety Council offers some [bicycle safety tips](#).

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