

Fact Sheet

Bicycle injuries are a common reason children attend Perth Children's Hospital every year.

On average, more than 450 children present to the emergency department annually due to a bike-related injury.

Most of these injuries occur on public roads. In many cases, no other vehicle is involved, and children are more likely to fall off their bike or collide with another object.

Riding bicycles

Children benefit from learning the road rules that encourage safe cycling practices. Parents and caregivers should be role models and encourage these safe practices:

- Obey the road rules and know what each traffic sign means.
- Current WA legislation states that everyone must wear an **approved cycling helmet** that complies with the mandatory standards listed under the Consumer Goods (Bicycle Helmets) Safety Standard 2024 and correctly fits the child's head.
- Teach children to look over their shoulder before they signal or turn. If there are cars nearby, they should stop at the side of the road and wait until it's safe.
- Encourage children to wear bright, visible clothing to help drivers and other road users notice them.
- Cyclists should always give way to pedestrians.
- Help children understand when it is safe to cross the road. Teach them to stop before entering the road, look in all directions, listen and think about when it is safe to cross the road.
- Remind children to always walk their bikes across streets, pedestrian crossings, and railway crossings to stay safe.
- Avoid listening to loud music when cycling. It is important that the rider can hear what is going on around them.

There are several providers available who can teach kids how to ride. For example, RAC has a Bike Basics workshop designed for kids.

For more information, visit: www.rac.com.au/about-rac/community-programs/workshops/bike-riding-basics

Cycling in rural areas

- Many people believe country roads are safer for children to ride, but children in rural areas are just as likely to lose control of their bikes.
- Country riders also deal with a range of road conditions, such as gravel, potholes, slippery surfaces, etc. Traffic is also permitted to travel at greater speeds in some country areas.



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Choosing a helmet

- Let the rider help choose their helmet. When they like the look, they are more likely to wear it.
- Try it on for comfort and fit. Head size in centimetres and helmet size in centimetres may differ, so not every helmet will fit snugly.
- Check that the helmet fits properly. Adjust the straps and fasten them firmly. The helmet should sit straight on the head. Place your palm under the front of the helmet and push up and back. The helmet should stay in place.
- Don't buy a helmet that is too big so the child can grow into it. It will be too big to protect the child now.
- Child helmets are vital for children up to age five or six. After that, their heads are almost adult-size, and they should be able to wear adult helmets.
- The helmet should feel comfortable and have good airflow. Ensure the helmet meets the mandatory standards listed under the Consumer Goods (Bicycle Helmets) Safety Standard 2024.

Second-hand bicycles and helmets

- If choosing to use a second-hand bicycle, ensure it is in good condition and meets all safety requirements.
- Second-hand helmets are not always a safe choice. It can be difficult to see damage to the foam lining. A damaged helmet will not protect the rider. With second-hand helmets, you may also be limited in your choice of comfort and fit.

Child carrier seats and trailers

Parents and carers may choose to use a child carrier seat on the bicycle or tow a trailer to transport children. This is legal to do so given the following safety precautions are taken:

- The rider must be at least 16 years of age.
- An approved and securely fastened helmet must be used by children in child carrier seats and children sitting in a trailer being towed by a bicycle.
- Children must be under 10 years old to sit in a trailer towed by a bicycle

Bicycle safety checklist

1. **Check** bicycle is the right size for your child. When sitting on the bicycle, the toes should touch the ground on both sides.
2. **Ensure** the child's bicycle is equipped with safety devices such as lights, reflectors, a bell or horn and an effective brake. Also regularly check that these are in good condition.
3. **Check** the condition of the tyres, looking out for bald spots, bulges and cuts. The tyre should not "squash" when firmly squeezed.
4. **Chains** should be frequently oiled and should not be too loose.
5. **Pedals** must spin freely.