Biking for Health and Safety

The bicycle is a source of pride and a symbol of freedom for adults and children. It is also a great resource for exercising. All too often, people are hurt, or even killed, when they fail to follow basic bicycle safety rules. The following information is essential to make every ride safe.

Choose the Right Bike

• While sitting on the seat with hands on the handlebar, you should be able to place the balls of both feet on the ground.
• While straddling the center bar, you should be able to stand with both feet flat on the ground with about a one-inch clearance between the crotch and the bar.
• When buying a bike with hand brakes, make sure that you or your child can comfortably grasp the brakes and supply enough pressure to stop the bike.
• If shopping for a bike for your child, take them with you. That way you can make sure it’s the right fit.

Follow the Rules of the Road

• Ride with the flow of traffic, not against. Stay as far to the right as possible.
• Respect traffic signals. Stop at all stop signs and stop lights.
• Stop and look left, right, and then left again before entering a street or crossing an intersection. Look back and yield to traffic coming from behind before turning left.
• Always put your bike away when the sun goes down. Never ride at night.
• Know your hand signals!

What to Wear When Riding

• Wear a helmet that meets safety standards developed by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Look for their sticker on the helmet or package.
• Wear bright clothing and reflective materials, especially on cloudy days, to help motorists see you.
• Wear snug fitting clothes. Loose fitting clothes, drawstrings and backpacks with straps can get caught in the bike.
• Make sure you can hear what is going on around you. Wearing headphones can be dangerous.

Know Your ABCs

Three things to check before every ride:

A Air – Are the tires properly inflated?
B Brakes and Bars – Are the brakes working and are the handlebars tightened at the right height?
C Chain – Is the chain tight and oily looking?

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration