

## Seven Smart Routes to Bicycle Safety

1. **Protect Your Head. Wear a Helmet.**
2. **Assure Bicycle Readiness. Ensure Proper Size and Function of Bicycle.**
3. **Ride Wisely. Learn and Follow the Rules of the Road.**
4. **Be Predictable. Act Like a Driver of a Vehicle.**
5. **Be Visible. See and Be Seen at All Times.**
6. **“Drive” with Care. Share the Road.**
7. **Stay Focused. Stay Alert.**

### 1. Protect Your Head. Wear a Helmet.

Never ride a bicycle without wearing a properly fitted helmet. Helmets are proven to be 85-88 percent effective in preventing traumatic brain injury, the primary cause of death and disabling injuries resulting from cycling crashes. Wear a helmet that meets the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) standard (see inside of helmet for presence of a label). For more information see the brochure: “Easy Steps to Properly Fit a Bicycle Helmet” in English: [www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/bike/EasyStepsWeb/index.htm](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/bike/EasyStepsWeb/index.htm) and in Spanish: [www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/bike/EasyStepsSpan/index.htm](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/bike/EasyStepsSpan/index.htm)

### 2. Assure Bicycle Readiness. Ensure Proper Size and Function of Bicycle.

- Use a bicycle that fits you:
  - ◆ Select Size: Stand over the top of your bicycle—there should be 1-2 inches of

clearance between you and the tube (bar) and 5 inches of clearance if riding a mountain bike.

- ◆ Adjust seat height—with a foot on the pedal, the fully extended leg should have a slight bend.
- Check all parts of the bicycle to make sure they are secure and working well:
  - ◆ Handlebars should be firmly in place and turn easily.
  - ◆ Wheels must be straight and secure; quick-release wheels must be secured (see your owner’s manual).
  - ◆ Brakes need adjusting by an experienced technician if: you cannot stop quickly; you apply the hand brake levers and they touch the handlebars; the brake pads are worn unevenly or they are separated more than one-eighth of an inch from the rim.

### 3. Ride Wisely. Learn and Follow the Rules of the Road.

Bicyclists are considered vehicles on the road and must follow traffic laws that apply to motor vehicles.

- Always ride with traffic and obey traffic lights, signs, speed limits, and lane markings.
- Know your traffic laws found in the State drivers’ licensing handbook.
- Signal in advance of a turn; use correct hand signals so others can anticipate your actions.
- Yield to pedestrians and other vehicles, as appropriate.
- If you choose to ride on a sidewalk, take extra caution at driveways and other intersections.
- Check for traffic by looking left-right-left before entering a street.

- Control your speed by using your brakes. If your bicycle has hand brakes, apply the rear brakes slightly before the front brakes.

### 4. Be Predictable. Act Like a Driver of a Vehicle.

- Older children and adults are safest riding on the road where the behaviors and responsibilities should be the same as all vehicle operators.
- Always ride with the flow of traffic, on the right side of the road, and as far to the right of the road as is practicable and safe. Motorists do not expect to see traffic coming in the opposite direction or on the sidewalk. When motorists don’t expect to see you, they may pull across your path or turn into you, causing a crash.
- Ride straight and do not swerve in a lane or in and out of traffic.

### 5. Be Visible. See and Be Seen at All Times.

Always assume you are not seen by others. Cyclists must take responsibility for being visible to motorists, pedestrians, and other cyclists. To enhance your visibility at night and in low-visibility conditions (dawn, dusk, and inclement weather):

- Wear neon and fluorescent colors. Wear special clothing made from reflective materials, for example, retro-reflective vests, jackets, wristbands, and patches for your back, legs and arms, and helmet;
- Install bicycle reflectors on both the front and back of your bicycle. If a carrier is added, make sure the rear reflector is visible. A flashing red light on the rear of the bicycle, backpack, or helmet will increase your visibility to others: and

- Be aware of your State or local laws regarding use of lights on bicycles. Many States have laws that require bicyclists to use a white front light at night. Use of lights in low-visibility conditions is also recommended.

Young children should be discouraged from riding at night.

## 6. "Drive" with Care. Share the Road.

When you ride, consider yourself the driver of a vehicle and always keep safety in mind.

- Choose to ride in the bike lane, if available. If the roadway or bike lane is wide, ride to the right; if the lane is narrow, you may choose to ride in the middle of the lane just like a motorized vehicle.
- Take extra precautions when riding on a roadway. Bicycles are smaller than motor vehicles, and don't protect the operator like a motor vehicle. You should:
  - ◆ Make eye contact, smile, or wave to communicate with motorists. Courtesy and predictability are a key to safe cycling;
  - ◆ Be considerate and aware of motorists and pedestrians. Learn to anticipate their actions. Remember, pedestrians have the right of way;
  - ◆ Ride far enough away from the curb to avoid the unexpected from parked cars (i.e. opening doors or drivers pulling out without checking);
  - ◆ Keep control of your bicycle: look behind you while maintaining your bicycle in a straight path; be able to ride with one hand on the handlebars and signal a turn. (Practice these skills in a parking lot);

- ◆ Always look over your shoulder, and if possible, signal before changing lanes;
- ◆ Make sure that books, clothes, and other items are securely attached to the bicycle or carried in a backpack; and
- ◆ Use bells, horns, or your voice to alert pedestrians and bicyclists that you are approaching or passing.

## 7. Stay Focused. Stay Alert.

- Never wear headphones; they hinder your ability to hear traffic.
- Always look for obstacles in your path (potholes, cracks, expansion joints, railroad tracks, wet leaves, drainage grates, or anything that could make you fall). Before going around any object, scan ahead and behind you for a gap in traffic, signal your intentions to move, then follow through with your intentions.
- Be aware of the traffic around you. Ride defensively.
- Use extra care when riding in wet weather, ice, frost, or snow. Slow your speed and allow extra time and space to stop.
- Use extra care when crossing bridges which are extra slippery under wet conditions.
- Use caution when crossing a railroad track; cross tracks at a 90-degree angle and proceed slowly.

For more information on bicycle safety, visit the **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Web site at [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov) or contact a local bicycle club or shop.**



DOT HS 810 773



May 2007

# Seven Smart Routes to Bicycle Safety for Adults

