



Wheeled Sports and Recreation Safety for Children Ages Six to 19 Years

Each year in New York State, on average, over 18,000 children ages 19 and younger are treated at a hospital for injuries from bicycles, skateboards, and other nonmotorized wheeled recreational equipment.

Twenty percent of the children who are hospitalized due to these injuries sustain a traumatic brain injury, the most severe type of head injury. Half of these children are between the ages of 10 and 14 years.

The good news is that **you**, as a parent or caregiver, can play a major role in preventing wheeled sports and recreation injuries.

What types of activities are included in "wheeled sports and recreation"?

- Wheeled sports and recreation include non-motorized activities such as roller skating, skateboarding, inline skating, bicycling, non-motorized scooters, and retractable roller sneakers (commonly known by their brand name "Heelys").

What NYS laws related to wheeled sports and recreation are important for me to know?

- All children under the age of 14 years must wear an approved bicycle helmet while bicycling, in-line skating, riding scooters, and skateboarding.
- If your child does not wear a helmet, you can be fined up to \$50, although, the fine is waived if you prove a helmet was obtained.

More information about bicycle laws can be found on the NYS Governor's Traffic Safety Commission (GTSC) website at www.nysgtsc.state.ny.us/bike-ndx.htm#helmet

What kind of helmet should I buy for my child?

- Select a helmet that meets the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) helmet standard. Each helmet meeting this standard will display a CPSC sticker.

- Make sure your child wears a helmet appropriate for his or her sport. Using the wrong helmet may interfere with balance and vision, causing a fall. A bicycle helmet can be worn while bicycling, roller and in-line skating, and scooter riding.
- Multi-sport helmets, which offer more protection to the back of the head, can be used for a variety of sports, including skateboarding.
- Buy a helmet that fits your child, not one that your child will "grow into."

How effective are bicycle helmets?

- When fitted properly, bicycle helmets can reduce the risk of head injuries by 85 percent and traumatic brain injuries by 88 percent. Because of their proven effectiveness, New York State promotes and encourages their use for all ages.

How do I know if the helmet fits my child properly?

- Helmets are often labeled by age or head measurement, but use these only as a guideline. Children's heads are many different sizes and shapes, so they must try it on and sometimes make adjustments to ensure it fits properly.
- The helmet should sit on top of the head in a level position and not be tilted back on the head. The helmet front rim should rest approximately two fingers width above the eyebrow and should be barely visible to the rider's eye.
- Straps should be adjusted for a snug, comfortable fit. No more than two fingers should fit between the helmet strap and the chin. Teach your child to always keep the straps buckled when riding.

What other protective equipment should my child wear?

- All skateboarders and in-line skaters should wear wrist guards and a helmet. Wrist guards can help reduce the risk of fractures while helmets protect against head injury. Protective knee and elbow pads are also helpful.

Can I transport my infant on a bicycle?

- Never transport a child under the age of one year on a bicycle. A baby's neck muscles are not strong enough to support a helmet.

When is my child ready to ride a two-wheeled bike?

- Consider your child's coordination and desire to learn to ride when deciding whether to allow him or her to ride a two-wheeled bike. Generally, children are ready to progress to a two-wheeled bike when they are five or six years old. Younger children should have bicycles with coaster (foot) brakes. They should not use bicycles with hand brakes until they are older and more experienced.

Is adult supervision necessary?

- Parents and guardians should supervise young children at all times when they are using wheeled recreational equipment because they may not have the experience or skills necessary to avoid injury.

What are some other wheeled sports and recreation safety tips?

- Only use wheeled sports and recreational equipment during daylight hours. It is unsafe to play at dusk or night. At night it is especially difficult for drivers to see children playing.
- If your teen must ride at night, his or her bike should have reflectors and a headlight and taillight. Wearing a reflective vest will also increase their visibility.
- Ride on smooth surfaces away from traffic.
- Older children who plan to practice tricks and trick jumps should do so only in a controlled environment, such as a skate park, with adult supervision and appropriate access to emergency medical care.
- Never allow your child to skate or skateboard in the street or to ride with another person on a bicycle or skateboard.
- Never allow your child to hold onto a car, truck or other moving vehicle while skateboarding, bicycling, roller skating, or inline skating.

Where can I find more information about wheeled sports and recreation safety?

- American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons - Inline Skating Safety (www.orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=A00138)
- American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons - Skateboarding Safety (www.orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=A00273)

- American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons - Scooter Safety (www.orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=A00343)
- Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute (www.bhsi.org)
- Children's Safety Network (www.childrenssafetynetwork.org)
- National Safety Council Inline Skating Fact Sheet (www.nsc.org)

NYS Data Source: NYS DOH, Bureau of Injury Prevention
http://www.health.state.ny.us/prevention/injury_prevention/
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