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Bike Safety Tips

Bike riding is a lot of fun, but accidents happen. Every year, about 300,000 kids go to the emergency department because of bike injuries. Some of these injuries are so serious that children die, usually from head injuries.

A head injury can mean brain injury. That's why it's so important to wear your bike helmet. Wearing one doesn't mean you can be reckless, but a helmet will provide protection for your head and brain in case you fall down.

Here are some safety tips for riding your bike:

1. **Obey traffic signs and signals** – The same laws that apply to motorists apply to cyclists. Obey all traffic control devices, such as stop signs, lights and lane markings. Always use hand signals to indicate your intention to stop or turn.
2. **Never ride against traffic** – Bikers should ride behind one another and with the flow of traffic.
3. **Follow lane markings** – Don't turn left from the right lane. Don't go straight in a lane marked "right-turn only".
4. **Don't pass on the right** – Motorists may not look for or see a bicycle passing on the right. Learn to scan the road behind you while riding. Look back over your shoulder without swerving, or use a rear-view mirror.
5. **Scan the road behind you** – Learn to look back over your shoulder without losing your balance or swerving. Be aware of your surroundings.
6. **Keep both hands ready to brake** – You may not stop in time if you brake one-handed. Allow extra distance for stopping in the rain, since brakes are less efficient when wet.
7. **Wear a helmet and never ride with headphones** – Always wear a properly fitted helmet. Never wear headphones while riding a bike.
8. **Dress appropriately** – In rain wear a poncho or waterproof suit. Dress in layers so you can adjust to temperature changes. Wear bright colored clothing. Wear a sturdy helmet to protect your head.
9. **Use hand signals** – Hand signals tell motorists and pedestrians what you intend to do. Signal as a matter of law, of courtesy and of self-protection.
10. **Ride in the middle of the lane in slower traffic** – Get in the middle of the lane at busy intersections and whenever you are moving at the same speed as traffic.
11. **Choose the best way to turn left** – There are two choices: (1) Like an auto: signal to move into the left turn lane and then turn left. (2) Like a pedestrian: ride straight to the far side crosswalk. Walk your bike across.
12. **Make eye contact with motorists** – Eye contact is important to let them know you are there.
13. **Avoid road hazards** – Watch out for potholes, cracks, rocks, wet leaves, storm grates, railroad tracks or anything that could make you lose control of your bike.
14. **Be visible** – Wear brightly colored clothing at all times. At night, use a white front light, red rear light or reflector and reflective tape or clothing.
15. **Keep your bike in good repair** – Adjust your bike to fit you and keep it working properly. Check brakes and tires regularly. Routine maintenance is simple and you can learn to do it yourself.

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