



# Public Service Announcement

## A Bicycle Helmet For My Child

### Does my child really need one?

The simple answer is yes. Connecticut law requires all children 15 years of age and younger to wear a helmet. That is because research shows that a bicycle helmet can prevent most cyclist head injuries. Nearly 700 bicycle riders are killed in the U.S. every year, almost all in collisions with cars, and most die of head injuries. Many thousands more suffer less severe but still debilitating injuries that are far worse than the physical pain of scraped skin or even broken bones. Your child can suffer permanent personality changes and learning disabilities from a brain injury, and both of you will be aware of what they have lost. Common long-term effects include concentration difficulties, aggressiveness, headaches and balance problems. Imagine a parent's anguish if this happens to their child.

### Need a new one every year?

No. Heads grow less than legs and feet. Many child helmets come with two or even three sets of foam fitting pads. Fitting pads do not affect the impact protection of the helmet, which is provided by the firmer crushable polystyrene foam (picnic cooler foam).

### Will my child actually use it?

Yes, if other children wear one, their parents use one, the teacher at school has told them how much good helmets do, and the child has picked out the one they really want. No, if the helmet makes your child feel like a "geek", nobody else uses one and it does not fit well. Perhaps yes if you have the will to enforce the rule. Most situations fall somewhere in between, and you know your child best. Seventh grade seems to be the most resisting age for helmets, when the feeling of invincibility is strong and the rage for fashion is undeniable. The key motivator of helmet use for kids is fashion, not safety. Try to make use of that.

### Does a Toddler Need a Helmet?

A child of any age needs head protection when riding, but a toddler's neck may not support the weight of a helmet. For this and other reasons, nobody in the injury prevention community recommends riding with a child under one year old. If in doubt, take child and helmet to a pediatrician for advice. Child helmets need ventilation in hot weather, since the foam holds heat in. Toddler heads vary in shape, so pay careful attention to fit.

### What about standards?

All helmets sold in the U.S. must meet the US Consumer Product Safety Commission CPSC standard and state that on a sticker inside. Fit is not tested by the standards, so you have to try the helmet on your child's head.

For more information please visit the Bicycle Safety Institute at <https://www.helmets.org>

