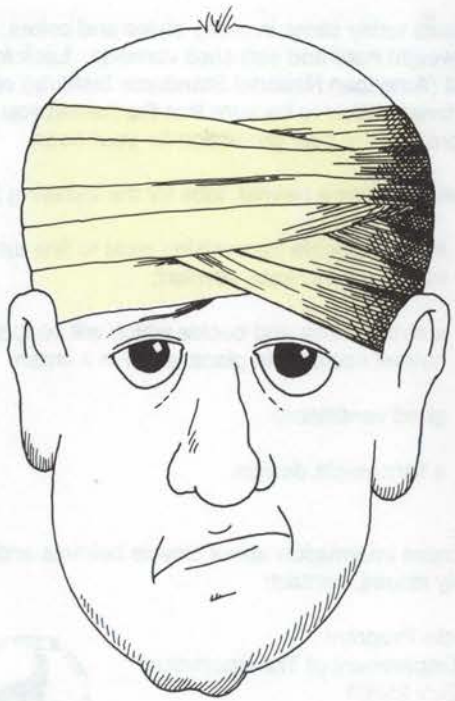
The only truly effective way to prevent a bicycle-related head injury is to wear a helmet every time you ride.



wrong

Bicycle Laws and Safety Tips

In North Carolina, the bicycle is legally classified as a vehicle. This means that bicycle riders have the same rights and responsibilities on the roadway as the drivers of motor vehicles. Specifically, North Carolina traffic laws require the rider of a bicycle to:

- ride on the right, traveling in the same direction as other moving traffic;
- obey all traffic signs and signals, including stop and yield signs and one-way directional signs;
- use hand signals to communicate intended movements;
- yield to pedestrians and emergency vehicles;
- equip the bicycle with a front lamp visible from 300 feet and a rear reflector or lamp which is visable from a distance of 200 feet at night.

To increase your safety when riding in traffic, it is also important to:

- always wear a helmet;
- acquire the bike handling skill necessary to help you avoid an accident;
- use a backpack or bicycle bag to carry goods;
- wear bright clothing to increase visibility;
- keep your bike in good repair.

Remember, the bicyclist always loses in a conflict with a motor vehicle. Ride defensively and in a predictable manner. Be courteous to other drivers. Keep traffic flowing by helping motorists pass you in a safe manner.

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Keep your head in a safe place

Wear a helmet

right

75% of all bicycle-related fatalities are the result of head injuries.

Many bicyclists feel that they don't really need a helmet or that they will look funny wearing one. If you are one of these riders, you need to know that head injuries are the most frequent cause of permanent disabilities and death resulting from bicycle crashes. In fact, in 75% of all fatalities and 85% of all head injuries the cyclist could have been saved by wearing a helmet. Consider these facts before you decide that looking "cool" is more important than protecting your head.

A good helmet will protect your head in three ways. First it distributes the impact of the crash over the entire surface of the helmet, rather than to the point of contact with your head. In addition, the dense liner of expanded polyfoam serves to decelerate the velocity of your brain as it crashes into the side of your skull. Finally, a helmet protects your head from sharp objects or protrusions at the point of impact. Once a helmet has been crashed, it should be replaced as its effectiveness will be reduced, even though there may be no visible damage.

Helmets today come in many styles and colors, in lightweight hard and soft shell varieties. Look for the ANSI (American National Standards Institute) or Snell approved sticker to be sure that the helmet you select will provide the best protection for your head.

When selecting a helmet, look for the following features:

- interchangable foam sizing pads to fine tune the fit and increase comfort;
- a strong strap and buckle which will keep the helmet securely in place, even in a crash;
- good ventilation;
- a lightweight design.

For more information about bicycle helmets and other safety issues, contact:

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