

# Bike Safety Tips

## Is bicycling a good exercise?

Yes, riding a bicycle is great exercise. It can help you get in shape and lose weight, and it can reduce the risk of health problems such as heart attacks. Bicycling puts less strain on your joints than jogging does, so bicycling is easier on your body.

## What causes bicycle crashes?

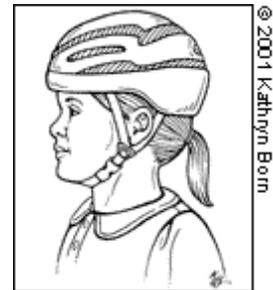
Sometimes your mistakes cause crashes, and other times car drivers or loose gravel on the road are to blame. You are more likely to be seriously hurt if you run into a car or if you are riding fast. Children can be hurt while doing stunts on their bicycles. Getting your fingers or toes caught in the spokes or the pedals can also cause injuries.

## What if I fall off my bike?

If you hit your head when you fall you should see a doctor, even if the injury seems minor.

## What can I do to avoid injury?

The best way to protect your head and face is by wearing a helmet. Make sure your helmet meets government standards. All children and adults should wear helmets when they ride, even on short trips. This is now the law in some states.



Here are some more tips for avoiding injury while riding a bike:

- Wear sports sunglasses can stop dust and bugs from getting into your eyes.
- Wearing bright, reflective clothing when you ride can make it easier for drivers to see you.
- Use padded gloves to protect your hands.
- Wear padded shorts and use a comfortable seat to reduce buttock pain.
- Avoid riding at night.
- Always stay alert and look out for anything in your way.

Parents should teach children basic traffic rules and make sure they ride in safe places. Children younger than 10 years of age should not ride near traffic.

## How can I be sure my bike is safe?

It is always a good idea to make sure that everything on your bicycle is working correctly. Get in the habit of checking that the brakes are working, and be sure there are no loose or broken parts on your bike. Reflectors and lights make you and your bicycle more visible to car drivers in the dark.

## What about child-carrier seats?

If you ride with a child on your bicycle, you should use a special seat that fits behind the main seat. The child always needs to wear a helmet when riding with you. Also, make sure the bike has spoke guards to prevent the child's feet from getting caught in the spokes.

## Other Organizations

- [American Trauma Society](http://www.amtrauma.org)  
http://www.amtrauma.org  
8903 Presidential Pkwy., Suite 512  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772-2656  
800-556-7890 or 301-420-4189
- [National Center for Injury Prevention and Control](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/ncipchm.htm)  
http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/ncipchm.htm  
Mailstop K58 4770 Buford Highway NE  
Atlanta, GA 30341-3724  
770-488-4265
- [Safe Kids Worldwide](http://www.safekids.org)  
http://www.safekids.org  
1301 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Suite 1000  
Washington, DC 20004-1707  
202-662-0600
- [Revolution Health Fitness Community](http://www.revolutionhealth.com/forums/fitness)  
http://www.revolutionhealth.com/forums/fitness

## Source

[Written by familydoctor.org editorial staff.](#)

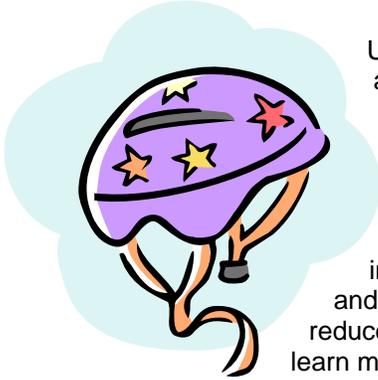
[Bicycle-Related Injuries](#) by MJ Thompson, M.B., CH.B., and FP Rivara, M.D., M.P.H. (*American Family Physician* May 15, 2001, <http://www.aafp.org/afp/20010515/2007.html>)

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## Bike/Helmet

The day you buy your child his first “big kid’s” bike. The day you remove the training wheels and watch him pedal away on his own. The day he heads to his friend’s house without asking you for a ride. These are milestones in both of your lives. So much more than a toy, a bicycle represents independence for your children.



Unfortunately, bicycles are more than a toy in another sense, too: they are associated with more childhood injuries than any consumer product except the automobile. In 2001, 134 children ages 14 and under died in bicycle-related crashes and in 2002, more than 288,900 were treated in hospital emergency rooms for bicycle-related injuries.

That’s why it’s so important to teach your kids bike safety as they enjoy their increased independence. You can greatly reduce your children’s risk of injury and death simply by setting some limits. A single rule – wear a helmet – can reduce the risk of head injury by as much as 85 percent. Explore the links below to learn more.

Nearly half of bike-related hospitalizations are diagnosed as traumatic brain injury.

[http://www.usa.safekids.org/tier2\\_rl.cfm?folder\\_id=169](http://www.usa.safekids.org/tier2_rl.cfm?folder_id=169)

# Nightmares and Night Terrors in Children

## What are nightmares?

Nightmares are scary dreams. Most children have them from time to time. One out of every 4 children has nightmares more than once a week. Most nightmares happen very late in the sleep period (usually between 4 a.m. and 6 a.m.). Your child may wake up and come to you for comfort. Usually, he or she will be able to tell you what happened in the dream and why it was scary. Your child may have trouble going back to sleep. Your child might have the same dream again on other nights.

## What are night terrors?

Some children have a different kind of scary dream called a "night terror." Night terrors happen during deep sleep (usually between 1 a.m. and 3 a.m.). A child having a night terror will often wake up screaming. He or she may be sweating and breathing fast. Your child's pupils (the black center of the eye) may look larger than normal. At this point, your child may still be asleep, with open eyes. He or she will be confused and might not answer when you ask what's wrong. Your child may be difficult to wake. When your child wakes, he or she usually won't remember what happened.

## Will my child keep having nightmares or night terrors?

Nightmares and night terrors don't happen as much as children get older. Often, nightmares and night terrors stop completely when your child is a teenager. Some people, especially people who have active imaginations and are creative, may keep having nightmares when they are adults.

## When should I worry about nightmares or night terrors?

Nightmares and night terrors in children are usually not caused by mental or physical illness. Often nightmares happen after a stressful physical or emotional event. In the first 6 months after the event, a child might have nightmares while he or she gets used to what happened in the event. If nightmares keep happening and disturb your child's sleep, they can affect your child's ability to function during the day. Talk with your doctor about whether treatment will help your child.

## What should I do?

Night terrors and sleepwalking require that you protect your child during sleep. Be sure your home is safe (use toddler gates on staircases and don't use bunk beds for children who have nightmares or night terrors often). Talk with your doctor if your child ever gets hurt while sleeping. Your doctor may want to study your child during sleep.

## Other Organizations

- [Revolution Health Sleep Community](http://www.revolutionhealth.com/forums/sleep)  
<http://www.revolutionhealth.com/forums/sleep>

## Source

[Written by familydoctor.org editorial staff.](#)

[Nightmares and Disorders of Dreaming](#) by JF Pagel, M.D. (*American Family Physician* April 1, 2000, <http://www.aafp.org/afp/20000401/2037.html>)

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