

Always Remember your Helmet!

With the arrival of spring, the melting snow and nicer weather will surely have bicycle users dusting off their bikes and stretching their wheels on the roads. Bike riding is an excellent way for families and individuals to participate in physical activity and enjoy the outdoors. When participating in this activity, it is important however to be safe and wear a helmet.

Something for all cyclists to keep in mind this spring is the new bike helmet legislation announced in December 2014 from Service Newfoundland and Labrador. As of April 1, 2015, it is mandatory for all bicyclists to wear a helmet. This announcement is an important step in preventing traumatic head and brain injuries that can occur from the absence of a helmet. Research indicates that there is a significant decrease in bicycle-related head injuries in provinces where there is legislation requiring cyclists to wear helmets versus the provinces and territories that do not have mandatory legislation. Newfoundland and Labrador follows in the steps of eight other provinces that have already implemented mandatory bike helmet use.

Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the highest rates of bicycle-related injuries and hospitalizations in the country. Head injuries are the leading cause of serious injury and death to kids on bikes. Injuries sustained from head trauma can affect thinking, memory, movement and personality which can be life-long and debilitating. A properly fitted helmet can prevent and reduce the severity of a head injury by 85%. Helmets absorb the force of an impact from a crash or fall and protect the head and brain from serious injury. Helmet use during bicycling could prevent four out of five brain injuries and reduce the risk of life-threatening and debilitating injuries, especially in children.

While wearing a helmet, it is important to make sure it fits properly. For a properly fitted helmet, users should not wear baseball caps, large hair buckles, or headphones. Helmets should also be level on the head. To ensure a properly fitted helmet, remember 2-V-1:

- Helmets should cover the top of the forehead and should rest about **2** fingers width above the eyebrows.
- The helmet straps should create a **V** shape around the ears and fit snugly when adjusted properly
- Buckle the chin strap and tighten it until you can fit **1** finger between the strap and the chin.

Helmets should also be approved by a standards label such as Canadian Standards Association (CSA), Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), Snell or American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM). These standards labels verify that the helmet design has been tested by the manufacturer.

The next time you or your family go for a bike ride keep these tips in mind and always remember your helmet!

For more information on the Newfoundland and Labrador Bike Helmet Legislation and bike helmet safety please visit <http://www.servicenl.gov.nl.ca/bikehelmet/>

The new bike helmet legislation is supported by the Newfoundland and Labrador Injury Prevention Coalition (NLIPC) the Western Injury Prevention Coalition (WIPC) and Western Health.

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