

# Prevent Bicycle Crashes: Parents and Caregivers

## A bicycle is not a toy. It's a vehicle!

- More than one-fifth of all bicyclist deaths occur among school age youth ages 5 to 15.
- More children go to hospital emergency departments for bicycle related crashes than for any other sport.
- Although most **deaths** occur as a result of bicycle and motor vehicle crashes, crashes can happen anywhere— in parks, on bicycle paths, and in driveways. Many crashes do not involve motor vehicles.
- Head injuries are the most serious type of injury and the most common cause of death for bicyclists. Bicycle helmets have been proven to reduce the risk of head and brain injury when a crash occurs by as much as 85 to 88 percent.
- Children and adults should wear a bicycle helmet every time they ride a bicycle.

## Children are NOT little adults. Children:

- Do not naturally use their peripheral vision. Children can be taught to use their peripheral vision when searching for traffic, however, children in grades K-3 are slower than older children and adults in identifying relevant objects in their peripheral vision.
- Do not automatically use sound to determine traffic location. Children automatically use their vision to identify traffic and do not typically think to use sounds as a strategy to determine where traffic is coming from.

- Are developing a sense of danger, but may frequently misunderstand the complexity of traffic situations. For instance, young school-age children often classify a traffic situation as being safe if no cars are present and do not realize that crossing the street at a curve in the road is dangerous even if cars are not visible.
- Are often restless, impatient, easily distracted and focused on the moment and/or themselves at the moment. They have trouble waiting for things like traffic lights or cars heading in their direction, lack impulse control and are present-oriented. They do not understand the serious consequences their actions can have on their safety.
- Believe that grownups will look out for them.
- Think that if they can see themselves, then other people can see them too. Children often believe that as long as they are not hiding in or under something or hiding in the dark that people can see them. For instance, a child crossing the road on a hill will believe that he can be seen by others and not realize that a driver coming over the hill will see him when it is too late.





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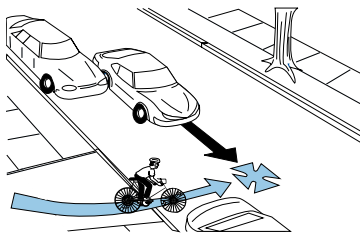
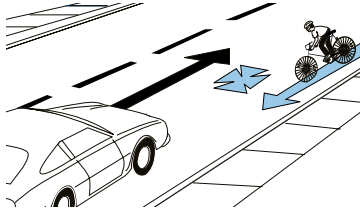
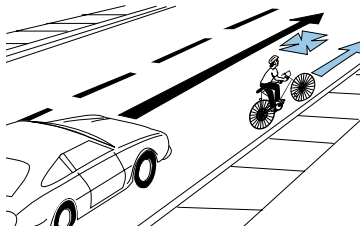
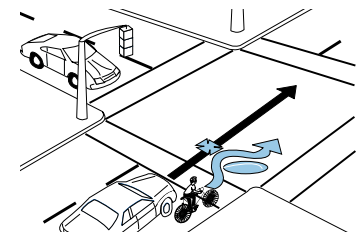
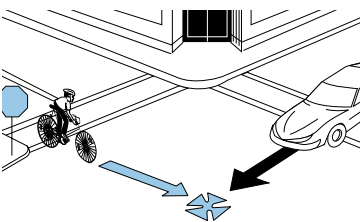
## What Can You Do?

- Set a good example for children and think of your own safety as well as the safety of your child. Everyone should wear a bicycle helmet and ride safely. For more information see the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) publication: “Easy Steps for Fitting a Bicycle Helmet” at: <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/bike/EasyStepsWeb/index.htm>  
In Spanish at: <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/bike/EasyStepsSpan/index.htm>
- Check with your driver licensing agency and highway department for booklets that explain State or local bicycle safety rules. For more information see NHTSA publication: “Kids and Bicycle Safety” at: (<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/bike/KidsandBikeSafetyWeb/index.htm>), also available in Spanish.
- Help your child become a better and safer cyclist. Enroll you and/or your child in a bicycle safety education program to gain more on-bicycle skill training. Look for programs in your school, community recreation centers, local or State bicycle coalitions, or through the League of American Bicyclists at [www.bikeleague.org](http://www.bikeleague.org).
- Observe and consider the uniqueness of your child when teaching bicycle safety.
  - ◆ Establish your rules of where and when your child can bicycle, based on your child’s abilities and limitations. Children of the same age may require different levels of supervision.
  - ◆ Apply your observations of your child’s behavior out of traffic. Is your child impulsive or a risk taker? Does your child act before thinking or

have trouble switching attention to something important? It is likely your child’s behavior in traffic will resemble behavior out of traffic.

- Check your child’s bicycle for correct fit, properly working parts, and reflectors.
- Most bicycle crashes are due to falls. Teach children in your care to: tie their shoe laces so they don’t get caught in the chain, look for and avoid hazards on the ground (toys, pebbles, potholes, etc), and to keep both hands on the handlebars.
- Teach your child to look left-right-left before entering the roadway or intersection.
- Avoid riding at night, as drivers often miss seeing cyclists. If riding at night or in low light conditions is unavoidable, make sure you and the child in your care are visible by wearing bright colored clothing, reflective gear and white head lights plus red rear reflectors.
- Never allow a child to ride a bicycle while listening to audio headphones; they obstruct their ability to hear and pay attention to traffic.
- Teach defensive riding including always looking out for others; many drivers do not look for bicyclists.
- Children nine years of age and younger, are not able to identify and adjust to many dangerous traffic situations, and therefore, should not be allowed to ride in the street unsupervised. Children who are permitted to ride in the street without supervision should have the necessary skills to safely follow the “rules of the road.”
- Teach children to use proper hand signals to let other road users know their intentions.

# Common Types Of Collisions Between Bicyclists & Motorists

| What Happens  | What It Looks Like   | What Bicyclists Should Do   |
|---|--|---|
| <p><b>Bicyclist Comes From Alley or Driveway</b></p> <p>Often called a “midblock rideout,” this is the most frequent crash type for young riders and occurs soon after the bicyclist enters the roadway from a driveway, alley, or curb without slowing, stopping, or looking for traffic. The bicyclist’s sudden entry leaves the motorist too little time to avoid a collision.</p>                                 |    | <p><b>Always stop and look.</b></p> <p>Look left-right-left for traffic before entering a roadway.</p>  |
| <p><b>Bicyclist is Riding the Wrong Way</b></p> <p>Motorists do not expect traffic to be approaching from the wrong direction. This creates a situation for a crash, which is the main reason why it is unlawful to ride facing traffic.</p>  |    | <p><b>Go with the flow.</b></p> <p>Always ride on the right side of the road, with traffic, just like cars do. It’s the law.</p>  |
| <p><b>Motorist Overtaking (Passing a Bicyclist)</b></p> <p>This type of crash occurs because the motorist fails to see and react to the bicyclist until it is too late. This type is more frequent at night, on narrow rural roads and often involves driver inattention and/or impaired driving.</p>   |   | <p><b>Avoid riding at night.</b></p> <p>Avoid dark conditions, narrow roads, and roads with highway speeds over 35 mph. Use white front lights, red rear reflectors or lights, and special retro-reflective clothing if you must ride at night.</p> |
| <p><b>Bicyclist Makes Left Turn or Suddenly Swerves</b></p> <p>The bicyclist swerves to the left without checking traffic or without signaling and moves into the path of an overtaking vehicle. The motorist does not have time to avoid a collision.</p>  |  | <p><b>Be predictable.</b></p> <p>Always ride in a straight line. When preparing to change your lane position, look behind you and <u>yield</u> to overtaking traffic. When making a turn, use the proper hand signal.</p>                           |
| <p><b>Failure to Obey Stop Signs</b></p> <p>Also called “stop sign rideout,” this crash occurs when the bicyclist enters an intersection that is controlled by a traffic signal and collides with a motor vehicle approaching from an uncontrolled lane. The bicyclist fails to stop or slow before entering the intersection. This dangerous action does not give the motorist enough time to avoid a collision.</p> |  | <p><b>Obey all traffic signals and signs.</b></p> <p>Watch for traffic signals. Walk your bicycle across busy intersections.</p>  |

For more information on bicycle safety, visit the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Web site at: [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov)