



Protect that Brain: Wear a Helmet!

From 2003-2007, more than 20,000 Utah bicyclists were hurt or killed in crashes with motor vehicles. In 2008 only 36.5% of Utahns wore a helmet and in 2009 almost 77% of teens *rarely or never* wore a helmet!

How do helmets protect your brain?

Imagine your brain as gelatin jiggling around in your skull. When your skull comes to an abrupt stop, the vulnerable brain hits the inside of the skull and injury occurs (concussion or worse). A helmet reduces the severity of that impact through crushable foam which absorbs some of the crash energy. To prevent injury, first of all ride/play with caution! Secondly, wear a helmet correctly. Here are some tips:

Safety Tips

Wearing a bike helmet can reduce the risk of head and brain injuries by 85-88%. In 2007 in the U.S., 92% of bicyclists killed in crashes were not wearing a helmet.

- Always wear a helmet when you ride a bike.
- Be sure your helmet is safety approved by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). This information can be found on the packaging of a new helmet.
- Your helmet should fit snugly.
- Your helmet should rest low and level on your forehead, just above your eyebrows. When you open your mouth to yawn, you should feel pressure on top of your head.
- Always fasten the strap. The strap should form a "V" below your ears.
- You should only be able to fit two fingers from your eyebrow to the brim of the helmet and two fingers under the chin strap.
- Adults should set a good example for children by wearing a helmet.

Cost to Utahns

If every Utah bike rider wore a helmet, each year it would prevent an estimated:

- Three deaths;
- 59 hospitalizations;
- 920 emergency department visits; and
- The loss of over \$18 million in health care costs.

Helmets are crucial in protecting your life whether you're riding your bike, ATVing, skiing, or playing contact sports among many other things. Play safe and wear your helmet!

Source: *Bicycle Helmet Use in Utah* (2009), Utah Department of Health: Violence and Injury Prevention Program, http://health.utah.gov/vipp/pdf/FactSheets/factSheet_BicycleHelmet_8-20-09_FINAL.pdf

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