



American Academy of Pediatrics



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Bicycle and Tricycle Safety

If you like to ride a bicycle, you'll probably consider getting a child carrier that attaches to the back of the bike. You should be aware that even with the best carrier and safety helmet, your child is at risk for serious injury. This can occur when you lose control on an uneven road surface, or if you should happen to strike or be struck by another vehicle. It's a good idea to wait to enjoy bicycling together until your child is old enough to ride with you on her own tricycle or two-wheeler.

As your child outgrows babyhood, she will probably want a tricycle of his/her own. Keep in mind that this right of passage has some unique hazards of its own. For example, a child on a tricycle is so low to the ground that he/she can't be seen by a motorist who is backing up.

But riding tricycles and bikes is almost an essential part of growing up. You can keep your child's first cycling experiences fun and safe by taking a few precautions. Keep the suggestions below in mind as you and your child begin bicycling together.

- Buy a tricycle only when your child is physically able to handle it. Most children are ready around age three.
- Buy a tricycle that is built low to the ground and has big wheels. This type is safer because it is less likely to tip over.
- Use the tricycle only in protected places. Don't allow your child to ride near automobiles or near swimming pools.
- Protect your child from injury by making sure she is wearing an approved bicycle helmet. Look for a "Snell Approved" or "Meets ANSI Z90.4 Standard" sticker inside or on the box.
- Be sure your child has the balance and muscle coordination necessary before removing training wheels. In general, children don't have the coordination to ride a two-wheel bicycle until around age seven.
- Never put a child under one year of age in a seat on the back of your bicycle. If you must carry your child on a bike, children who are old enough to sit well unsupported and whose necks are strong enough to support a lightweight helmet may be carried in a rear-mounted seat.
- Attach any rear-mounted seat securely over the rear wheel. Add spoke guards to prevent feet and hands from being caught in the wheels and have a high back seat with a sturdy shoulder harness and lap belt that will support a sleeping child.
- Prevent or minimize head injury to a young passenger by ensuring a lightweight infant bike helmet is always worn.
- Strap your child into the bike seat with a sturdy harness.

- Never ride with a child on the front handlebars or place a seat there.

Excerpted from "[Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5](#)" Bantam 1998

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