Cycling 101: Safety tips for riders and drivers.



Fitness? Fresh air? A way to go back and forth? These are just a few of the reasons you're spotting more and more cyclists on the streets. And whether you're a rider or a driver, you're not the only one who's noticed.

In fact, when the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration studied data from 2000 to 2012, they saw a big increase, too. They noticed that now, 64 percent more people are commuting by bike. And with the warmer weather we're having, that number is only rising.

But, that's not the only number on its way up. Unfortunately, more bikers also mean more accidents.

Who's at risk?

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, people between the ages of 15 and 19, along with adults over the age of 40, have the highest bicycle death rate. And statistically, men are more likely to suffer serious injuries.

Where are accidents happening?

Because of how busy urban areas are, that's where crashes are more common.

When are accidents happening?

The hours between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. mark the most dangerous, because according to NHTSA, that's when the largest number of bicycle deaths occur.

How can riders be safer?

- **Find the right fit.** Have the right bike for your height? If not, it can be harder to control.
- **Make sure it's maintained.** Is everything ready to roll? Before your first ride of the summer, check your tire pressure and your brakes.
- **Make yourself seen.** Before you go, gear up. Wear colors that are bright, and whenever possible, pick ones that'll reflect light.
- **Protect your head.** Every year, bicycling causes more head injuries requiring hospitalization than baseball, football, skateboards, kick scooters, horseback riding, snowboarding, ice hockey, in-line skating and lacrosse.

> *Wearing a bicycle helmet can reduce the risk of a head injury by 50%.*
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- **Say no to headphones.** While it may be tempting to turn on the tunes, it makes it harder to hear sirens or horns that are heading your way.
- **Go with the flow.** Always ride in a straight line, in the same direction as traffic.
- **Follow the rules of the road.** Remember: Street signs and traffic signals apply to you, too.
- **Don't drink and ride.** You know how alcohol can affect someone who's getting behind the wheel. But did you know it could also alter your ability to get behind the handlebars?

> *For cyclists, one drink can increase the probability of a serious injury by a factor of six.*
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How can drivers be safer?

- **Search your surroundings.** They try their best to be visible, but sometimes, you still don't see them. The best advice? Expect the unexpected. Before you do anything, do a quick scan for cyclists.
- **Don't drive distracted.** When you're behind the wheel, be attentive. Need a little assistance? Take a look at these tips and tricks.
- **Share the road.** Even if they're on a bike, treat them like they're in a car. (And pass them like they are, too.) Keep at least three feet between you and a cyclist at all times.
- **Don't underestimate their speed.** Bikes can travel quicker than you think, as high as 20 miles per hour.
- **Learn the signs.** If a cyclist is turning left, they'll stick their arm straight out to the left. If they're turning right, they'll stick their arm straight out to the right. (Alternatively, they may bend their elbow to form a 90-degree angle and point their fingers up.) When they're stopping, they'll bend their elbow to form a 90-degree angle and point their fingers down.

For more information about safe riding and driving, talk to an independent insurance agent near you. Find one today.