

## **KIDS ARE NOT SMALL ADULTS**

All too often, kids are blamed for the traffic crashes in which they are involved. They are labeled careless or lacking in caution. To the contrary, young children act in a manner determined by their age and degree of development. It is essential to understand the developmental characteristics that influence a child's behavior as a bicyclist.

### **Specifically, children:**

- Have a narrower field of vision than adults, about 1/3 less.
- Cannot easily judge a car's speed and distance.
- Assume that if they can see a car, its driver must be able to see them. However, children are easily hidden from view by parked cars and other objects.
- Cannot readily tell the direction a sound is coming from.
- May be impatient and impulsive.
- Concentrate on only one thing at a time. This is likely not to be traffic.
- Have a limited sense of danger.
- Often mix fantasy with reality.
- Imitate the behavior of others, especially older children and adults.

**To become proficient in bicycling, extensive practice must occur. It is recommended to have 100 hours of learning and practice to develop a reasonable degree of proficiency.**

Here are some bike safety topics to discuss with your child:

### **RIDE WITH TRAFFIC**

The law requires all bicyclists to ride on the right-hand side of the road with traffic. Riding against traffic has been shown to be a contributing factor in one out of every five bike/car crashes. This is because riding against traffic puts bicyclists where motorists least expect them. Motorists turning right normally only look for traffic coming from the left, not from the right.

### **STOP AND LOOK BEFORE ENTERING A STREET**

Riding into the street from a driveway without stopping is the cause of half the bike fatalities of kids eight and under. It accounts for about one-third of serious crashes involving children eight to twelve. Explain to your children that they must get in the habit of always stopping and looking for traffic at the end of a driveway, parking lot, or alley. Have them practice by looking left, then right, then left again.

### **STOP AT ALL STOP SIGNS AND RED LIGHTS**

Often, kids break this rule when riding with friends or when they are distracted. This is another major cause of bike/car collisions involving children. Stopping for traffic control devices should be stressed so it becomes a reflex; it will also stop them from being ticketed!

### **LEARN TO SCAN-LOOK BEHIND FOR TRAFFIC**

Many kids have been taught to signal before turning, but not enough attention has been placed on looking behind them first. Explain to your child that there is nothing magical about signaling; it won't make a car stop for you. You have to make sure nobody is coming from behind. If there are lots of cars behind, the rider should get off the bike and walk across the intersection using the crosswalks, if available.

### **WEAR A HELMET**

Helmets save lives. Seventy-five percent of all serious bicycle injuries involve a head injury that might have been prevented, if the bicyclist was wearing a helmet. It is highly recommended that bicyclists of all ages wear a CPSC approved helmet while bicycling, especially parents and other adults who set an example for others.

### **MAKE YOUR OWN DECISIONS**

Stress to your child that he or she needs to stop, look, and decide for his or herself if the road is clear before crossing a street or making a turn. It is not safe to just follow a friend.

### **A FINAL NOTE**

Having his or her own transportation gives your child mobility and helps him or her grow personally. Thank you for allowing your child to take on this exhilaration sport and helping them learn how to do it safely. If bicycling is not already a family activity, give it a try!