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# BICYCLE SAFETY FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Riding bicycles and tricycles are fun and a good way to get exercise. A properly fitted helmet is one way to keep children safe when they are out on their bikes. Most serious injuries and deaths associated with child cyclists involve collisions with a motor vehicle. The most severe injuries are those involving the head and brain. Other serious injuries include broken bones, facial injuries and serious skin abrasions that require grafts. Using a helmet could save a child's life and prevent unnecessary head injuries!

A helmet fits when it is snug on the head and is adjusted as the picture below indicates. There are helmets specifically designed for toddlers over the age of 1year that are light, yet offer additional protection.

Make sure the helmet is safety approved by CSA (Canadian Safety Standards Association), CPSC (Consumers Product Safety Commission), Snell (Snell Memorial Foundation) or ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials). Helmets should be replaced: a) as the child grows out of it, b) after any fall that involves the helmet, or c) every five years. Helmets should never be shared. Teach children that helmets are part of “a wheeled cycling uniform, one for their safety”. When parents wear helmets too, they provide important positive role modeling!




Teaching and role modeling is key, we need to protect a child’s head with a helmet, and, we also need to ensure the riding environment is safe and appropriate for the child’s developmental stage. Parked cars on a road can pose a serious threat to small riders as they can block a young rider’s view of moving traffic. Residential sidewalks can pose a danger if a child is cycling and a car is backing out of a driveway.

Keep in mind that riding a bicycle near motor vehicles requires a complex set of skills that children gradually develop between 10 and 14 years of age. They must be able to balance their bike, and signal while simultaneously paying attention to vehicles. A child’s brain cannot manage this combination of physical and cognitive skills before 10 years of age, at the earliest. This is why it is so important for you to ride with your child until they develop these cycling skills!

# CAR SEAT SAFETY FOR CHILDREN

Motor vehicle crashes are the number one cause of death for children one to nine years of age. Nearly all of these deaths could be prevented if these children were restrained properly in vehicles. When used correctly, car seats can reduce deaths by 90 per cent and serious injuries by 70 per cent. Infants and children require special restraints to make sure that the forces of a crash are distributed to the strongest bone structure.

## *Rear Facing Car Seats*

A child should be restrained in a rear-facing car seat until they are at least 22lbs **and** 1 year of age **and** walking unassisted. **Best Practice recommends you do not rush the stages**, and keep a rear facing position until 2 years of age. Most children will out grow their 'infant only seat', before 12 months and will need a larger car seat used rear facing. Many of the convertible (forward/rear-facing) seats will accommodate a child 30-45 lbs in the rear-facing mode. Refer to the car seat manual to check the height and weight limitations.

It is necessary to follow the instructions for the car seat and the vehicle owner's manual in order to safely use and install any car seat. Check that:

- Shoulder harnesses are snug and at or below the shoulders
- Chest clip is at the armpit level
- Harness straps lie flat
- No bulky clothing, blankets or anything else is under or behind the child so the harness stays snug to the child's body.
- The car seat is installed tightly, locked in place and at a 45 degree angle.

## Forward Facing Seats

Don't rush the stages, usually between 18-24 months is a good transitional time! Children can travel forward facing when they are at least 22 lbs and walking unassisted, though babies can remain rear facing as long as they are within the height or weight limits of the car seat. In the rear facing position a car seat is made to absorb crash forces!

It is necessary to follow the instructions for the car seat and vehicle owner's manual in order to safely use and install any car seat. Check that:

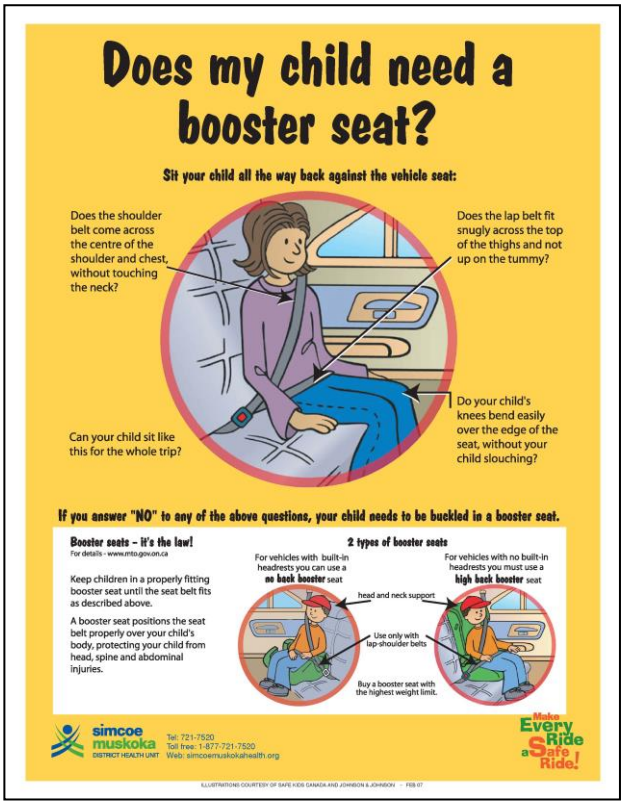
- Shoulder harnesses are snug and at or above the shoulders
- Chest clip is at the armpit level
- harness straps lie flat
- no bulky clothing, blankets or anything else is under or behind the child so the harness stays snug
- Car seat is installed tightly and locked in place.

Some children outgrow their car seat but are not ready for a booster seat. For these children, there are a variety of forward-facing car seats available to meet their higher heights and weights.

Anyone with questions about their car seats can call your Health Connection at 721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 for information and assistance.

## Booster Seats

The law states that booster seats are required for children between 40 and 80 lbs, less than 4-feet-9 inches and less than 8 years of age. A booster seat positions the seat belt properly over the child's body, protecting the child from head, spine, and abdominal injuries. Keep children in a properly-fitting booster seat until the seat belt fits as described in link below.



## *Second hand Car Seats*

### Second hand car seats may seem like a bargain but beware!

**It is important to note that if you own a car seat or booster seat made before January 1, 2012, under Health Canada's Canada Consumer Product Safety Act, you may not be able to advertise, sell, or give it (including lending) away because it may not meet the latest requirements set out by Health Canada.**

There are some other important things you need to know before you use a second hand seat.


- Does the car seat have a CMVSS sticker? Each seat sold in Canada should be labeled with a CMVSS sticker.
- Provincial and territorial legislation does not allow the use of U.S manufactured car seats in Canada.
- Do you know the age and history of the seat? Find out this information from the previous owner.
- Do not use the car seat if it has been involved in a car crash.
- Have you checked for recalls on the seat? To find out if there has been a recall contact: Transport Canada at 1-800-333-0371 or visit their website www.tc.gc.ca/roadsafety.
- If the car seat is missing the stickers and manufacturer information, do not use it.

## SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Studies have shown that adding seat belts to the current seating configuration of a school bus can increase the chance of head and neck injuries. For a seat belt to be effective, it must be worn correctly, snug and on the upper thighs. Because school vehicles carry passengers from the very young to high school students, if seat belts were used, they would need to be readjusted and their use monitored. A seat belt worn incorrectly may cause serious injuries.

The interior of a school bus is designed differently from passenger cars. School buses protect passengers by “compartmentalization” or passive protection. According to Transport Canada – the key is that the back of each seat is padded and is a specific distance from the seat behind it. If the bus comes to a sudden stop, the padded seat back absorbs the forward energy of the child seated behind. Without a seat belt, the child’s body slides forward and hits the seat back in such a way as to distribute the force

of the impact over the entire upper body. Adding seat belts to these compartmentalized designed seats would increase the risk of head and neck injuries.

When riding on a school bus, children should be required to sit upright facing forward in their seats and be carefully supervised when getting on and off the school bus.

## PLAYGROUND SAFETY

In Simcoe County and Muskoka District, falls were responsible for 43% of all unintentional injury-related hospitalizations among children under 10 years of age. The playground is where half of those injuries took place. Nationally, falls account for almost three quarters of all playground injuries. Most falls involve climbers, slides or swings. Deaths have occurred due to strangulation when drawstrings; skipping ropes; scarves or loose clothing becomes entangled in the playground equipment or fences.

**Teach and Supervise** young children closely. Many playground injuries happen when children are unattended or not watched closely enough. Play with your children, and teach them playground safety rules:

- Wait your turn
- No pushing, shoving or horseplay
- Slide down feet first
- Don't go up the slide ladder until the other person has gone down the slide
- Hold on to railings
- Wait until play structures are dry, slippery surfaces can cause serious injuries
- Sit down on swings and slides
- Never jump from unsafe heights
- Keep away from moving swings and the bottom of slides
- Avoid wearing loose clothing including drawstrings and scarves on play equipment.

Parachute Canada is a great resource for more safety tips on Playground Safety
http://www.parachutecanada.org/injury-topics/topic/C15

The Canadian Standards Association (CSA) have published safety standards for playground safety www.csa.ca

## What can I do to keep kids safe at my home playground?

1. Start with equipment that young children can use safely, instead of expecting your children to grow into the equipment. Young children are often injured on equipment designed for older children. To help make sure that your home equipment is appropriate for the age of your children, build your play space in stages. A good rule to follow: If a child is too small to reach and use equipment by himself, it is not designed for children his age. Also remember to include natural elements of play: low rocks, trees and stumps all encourage creative play!

2. Falls are the number one cause of injury. There are several ways you can keep children from getting badly hurt by falls from playground equipment:
   - A deep, soft surface will cushion the impact of falls and prevent many injuries. Sand, pea gravel, shredded bark mulch, wood chip nuggets and rubber mulch are acceptable natural materials to put under home play equipment. Many gardening centres and hardware stores carry these materials and can help you calculate how much surfacing you need.
   - Keep heights low. Keep high equipment out of reach of children younger than five years. For example, remove the lowest rung of ladders to keep toddlers from climbing.
   - Make sure equipment has guardrails or barriers to prevent falls. The CSA standards recommend barriers on equipment higher than 30 inches (75 cm) if preschoolers will be playing on it, and on equipment higher than four feet (120 cm) for children five years and older.

3. Swing seats should be made of soft material such as rubber or canvas. Many injuries occur when children are hit with a hard swing seat.

4. Make sure there is lots of space around equipment. The CSA standard recommends that there be six feet (1.8 m) between any two pieces of play equipment, as well as between equipment and fencing, or other structures. Swings and slides require more space. Many backyards will not allow this much space. Keep spacing in mind when you plan your yard.

5. Equipment should be firmly anchored in the ground.

6. There should be no points that could catch children's clothing. Children have died from strangulation when clothing or ropes they were playing with became entangled in high equipment. Check particularly at the top of slides, S-hooks on swings, the joints of climbers, and nearby fencing.

7. Take off anything that could strangle your child before he goes out to play. Take off any strings or drawstrings on your child's clothing. In winter, use clips instead of strings to hold the mittens. Make sure your child wears a neck warmer instead of a scarf. Do not let your child take skipping ropes or bike helmets onto playground equipment.

8. Always supervise young children at water play. Toddlers can drown in a few inches of water. Empty large pails and wading pools when you leave the play area.

9. Inspect your backyard playground regularly (several times each month) and make repairs or remove broken equipment. Look for signs of wear, splintering or cracks. Check that bolts are tight and equipment is still well anchored. Check the depth of surfacing, and rake it to keep the surfacing loose and remove debris. Add more surfacing where necessary.

10. Supervise actively. For children younger than five years, we recommend that you stay close to children as they play. Be ready to catch them when they are on equipment. Keep them on equipment under five feet high, and keep an eye on the behaviour of older children; they like to take chances.

The CSA standards do not formally apply to home play equipment. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission has safety tips for home playgrounds, available on the internet at: www.cpsc.gov or by phone at 1-800-638-2772. Although this is not a Canadian source, U.S. and Canadian playground safety standards are similar.

Adapted from the Safe Kids Canada (Now known as Parachute Canada)– Home Playground Safety Fact Sheet