



Jeb Bush  
Governor

M. Rony François, M.D., M.S.P.H., Ph.D.  
Secretary, Department of Health

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**PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **May is National Bike Month**

Each year, more than 130 children die from bicycle-related injuries, and more than 280,000 are treated in emergency rooms. Of these, nearly half (47 percent) have traumatic brain injuries. Properly fitted bike helmets could reduce the risk of bike-related brain injuries by 88 percent; unfortunately less than 25 percent of cyclists ages 14 and under usually wear a helmet.

**A bike helmet is essential safety gear.** Helmets could prevent an estimated 75 percent of fatal head injuries to child cyclists and could prevent up to 45,000 head injuries to children each year.

A helmet should be labeled to indicate that it meets the standards set by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. As long as it's certified and brand new, let kids pick out their own helmets. If they think a helmet looks cool, they'll be more likely to wear it when you're not around.

The Pinellas County Health Department reminds parents and caregivers to:

- Teach kids to obey traffic signs and the rules of the road. Kids should not ride without supervision until they have demonstrated that they always follow the rules.
- Make sure the helmet fits and your kids know how to put it on correctly. In a crash, the risk of head injury is doubled if the helmet is worn incorrectly. A helmet should sit on top of the head in a level position, and should not rock forward and backward or side to side. The helmet straps must always be buckled but not too tightly. Safe Kids recommends the "Eyes, Ears and Mouth" test: The rim of the helmet should be one to two finger-widths above the eyebrows, the straps should form a "V" just below the ear lobe, the buckle should be flat against the skin and the strap should feel snug when the rider's mouth is open.
- Make sure the bike itself is the right size for the child. There should be 2-4 inches of clearance between the bike frame and the child's groin when the child's feet are flat on the ground. Also, make sure the bike is in good repair — reflectors are secure, brakes work properly, gears shift smoothly, and tires are tightly secured and properly inflated.

**(MORE)**

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- Remember bike helmets are for biking only. Kids should not wear bike helmets on the playground (where the straps can get caught on equipment and cause injury) or for activities that require specialized helmets (such as skiing or football).
- Know the law. In 19 states, the District of Columbia and more than 140 local jurisdictions, children under 16 are required by law to wear a helmet while riding a bike. In some jurisdictions, the helmet law also applies to scooters, inline skates and skateboards.

When in doubt, get help. The sales staff at any bicycle shop or outdoor recreation store should be able to provide expert advice on fitting and adjusting bikes and helmets. Additional information is available from the Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute and the League of American Bicyclists, which has coordinated National Bike Month annually since 1956.

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*The mission of the Pinellas County Health Department is to promote, protect and improve the health and safety of residents and visitors through public and private community efforts.*  
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