



**Department of Health**  
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**NEWS RELEASE**  
Bicycle Safety

There are few things that will give you a greater sense of freedom than to jump on a bicycle and tour around town. Seeing the sights up close can be more fun than riding in a car and it's a great way to be physically active.

"At the same time that you're enjoying yourself, you have to keep safety in mind. It's important that you wear a helmet every time you ride a bicycle," said Pat Crispell of the Otsego County Department of Health.

"Only a small percentage of Americans wear helmets, perhaps because they have a false sense of confidence about the safety of bicycle riding. Each year about 50 New York residents are killed in bicycle crashes," she said.

The overwhelming majority of those killed in bicycle crashes were not wearing helmets. Head injury is the leading cause of bicycle-related death and using a helmet is the most effective way to reduce these injuries and fatalities.

New York State law requires all children under the age of 14 to wear approved bicycle helmets when biking or riding as a passenger on a bicycle. A violation could result in a fine of up to \$50 for a parent or guardian. But, regardless of your age, you should always wear a helmet.

When shopping for a helmet, be sure the helmet you choose sits level on your head and covers the top of your forehead. Make sure it is snug, yet comfortable, with limited movement from side to side and front to back. If you fall and strike your head on the ground, you should replace your helmet because it may have suffered damage you cannot see. Keep all your protective gear and equipment in good working order.

All bicyclists should know and follow these rules of the road:

- Ride on the right side of the road. You will head in the same direction as cars so you will see their tail lights, not their headlights.
- Obey traffic signs and signals just as you would if you were driving a car.
- Use correct hand signals when turning.
- Stop at all intersections and marked and unmarked crosswalks.
- Stop and look both ways before you enter a street.
- Yield the right of way to pedestrians, skateboarders and skaters. Never pass until you have the other person's attention.
- Children should ride on sidewalks and paths until they are at least 10 years old, able to show good riding skills and able to observe basic rules of the road.
- Wear reflective clothing and make sure your bike has a headlight and a rear reflector. If you ride at night, consider using additional lighting, reflective bands, vests and clothing to increase your visibility.
- Watch for the unexpected, such someone darting into the street or opening a car door.

For more information about bicycle safety, call the Otsego County Department of Health at (607) 547-4230 or visit the New York State Department of Health web site at [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov).

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