

# Walking and Bicycling Resources

## HELMETS: DOES COST MATTER?



### QUALITY IN HELMETS



A helmet won't do any good unless it's on your head. Always wear your helmet!

Like bicycles, helmets come in a wide variety of quality and prices. While the most expensive helmet may not provide more protection than a bare-bones model, a functional helmet is crucial for safe riding.

Helmets approved by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (marked by a CPSC sticker) usually sell in bike shops or through the mail starting at about \$20. All CPSC-approved helmets are equal in their safety effects.

You may also see ATSM- or Snell-certified helmets, but the CPSC certification corresponds directly to federal law and is the most common certification.

Does cost affect overall safety? Yes and no. In terms of function, helmets all work similarly, employing highly compressed Styrofoam encased in plastic to absorb impact upon collision; cost will not make a major difference in performance.

Price comes into play on characteristics like ventilation, weight, and style. All three contribute to helmet comfort, which determines how likely a bicyclist is to wear it.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF COMFORT

Since an unworn helmet does not protect your head, comfort matters. Proper ventilation can help a rider's head to stay cool. A heavy helmet can give a rider a weighed down feeling, possibly leading to muscle strain in the neck. An unfashionable helmet may lead a rider to feel embarrassed. If you are unlikely to wear a helmet because it is too uncomfortable or unfashionable, then spending more for a helmet that you will wear is worth it.



Some helmets are so comfortable you forget you're wearing them

### REPLACING HELMETS

Always replace a helmet after involvement in a collision. Visible damage may be hard to detect, but the overall integrity may be compromised. This is also a reason to be wary of cheap used helmets. Helmets that have not been crashed still require replacement after enough wear. Most manufacturers recommend replacement of uncrashed helmets after 5 years.

Bicycling is fun; it should also be safe. Remember to wear your helmet!