

Ask The Expert

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Q) My son had a mild concussion as a toddler. He is now 7 and wants to sign up for a soccer league. I know that heading the ball is part of the game. Should I worry about another concussion?

A) Soccer is now the most popular organized sport for children in Canada, surpassing hockey even before the NHL lockout! It's a great way for children to get and stay in shape. There is evidence that repeated heading of a soccer ball can cause concussion-like symptoms. Although we need to study this further, we recommend that no child under the age of 10 should head the ball.

We know that children who have sustained previous concussions are at higher risk for getting another concussion, although the reasons for this are not clear. This is all the more reason for your child to avoid heading the ball when he plays soccer.

Q) My daughter is 10 and enjoys horseback riding. I have always ensured that she wears a riding helmet. I have seen those protective vests. Do they protect against spinal cord injuries?

A) I'm pleased to hear that your daughter wears an approved riding helmet when she is horseback riding. This will considerably lower her risk of sustaining a significant head injury while riding. Body protectors are designed to reduce trauma from blunt impacts and falls. They can help to provide some protection to the trunk by reducing the severity of soft tissue injuries and rib fractures. The Safety Equipment Institute (SEI) has approved a new certification for equestrian protective vests.

While these vests reduce the risk of injury to the torso, spinal cord injuries can still occur, as these vests do not protect the neck. As such, we always recommend that all riders exercise caution and be aware of the terrain where they are riding.

Q) My 14 year old son is a 'super jock'. He participates in most organized sports as well as recreational activities such as bicycling, in-line skating, and skateboarding. Is there a single helmet that would provide adequate protection for all these activities?

A) While any helmet is better than no helmet at all, we recommend using a helmet certified for each specific activity because different helmets protect differently. Some helmets, like cycling helmets, are designed to withstand only one major impact or crash. Others, like skateboard helmets are designed for multiple impacts. Any helmet that is cracked or any cycling helmet that has protected you from a major crash should be replaced immediately. You can use the chart on this page as a guide for which helmet to use.

HOW TO FIT A HELMET

Activity → Helmet

Bicycling → Bicycle helmet

A CSA certified bicycle helmets is a single impact helmet - protects for only 1 crash

Scotering → Bicycle helmet

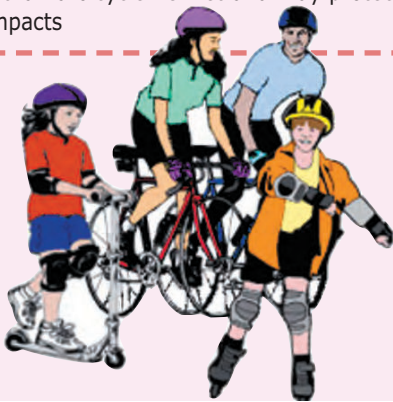
A CSA certified bicycle helmets is a single impact helmet - protects for only 1 crash

In-line skating → Bicycle/Inline skating helmet

There are specialized inline skating helmets that cover more of the back of the head. They may or may not be a multiple impact helmet so reading the instructions is very important.

Skateboarding → Skateboard helmet

A specialty skateboarding helmet will cover more of the head than a bicycle helmet and may protect against multiple impacts



Before you buy a helmet

Look for the CSA certification mark. A helmet with this sticker meets the requirements of Canada's only National Standard for cycling helmets.



How to size a helmet

Use a measuring tape to measure the child's head (just above the eyebrows)

Look on the helmet packaging and match the size of the helmet to the measurement of the child's head

Use the measurement as a guide. Try on the helmet to test the fit.

Pads are included. Use the suitable size padding so the pads touch the top, back, front and sides of the head. The helmet should fit snug and level.

When the straps and comfort pads are adjusted, the helmet should not move forward, backward or come off.

Proper fit is essential for safety.

The helmet should sit level on the forehead and extend down to about 2 fingers above the eyebrows.

The V strap should be snug under each earlobe to form a 'v' under each ear.

The chin strap should be done up snugly. 1 finger should fit loosely between the strap and chin.

Do not wear hats or hair ornaments when fitting or wearing a helmet.

1 bang rule

Your bicycle helmet is good for only 1 crash.

Replace it after it is involved in a crash. Cracks and damage caused by normal wear and tear are sometimes difficult to see but may decrease safety.

