

Bike helmets

Wearing a helmet can save you from serious injury. It could save your life. In 1990, bike helmets were uncommon. In that year, 42 percent of riders admitted to hospital after a crash had head injuries. Every year since then, the proportion of bike crashes that involve head injuries has fallen. In the year to March 2000, the figure

was down to 22 percent.

By law, only helmets made to the specifications of appropriate standards can be sold here.

The most important thing is the fit. Unless your helmet is fitted properly and worn properly, it won't give you good protection and may even do more harm than good.

How to get the right fit



Most helmets have the size in millimetres on the pack. Get someone to measure your head with a tape measure so you know what size to look for.

The helmet should touch your head all the way around the rim and at the top. It should sit flat and just 1 to 1.5 centimetres above your eyebrows. The straps should run in straight lines from the rim, with the rear strap and front strap meeting just below and to the front of the earlobe.



Tighten the back strap and secure the buckle so it is firm but not tight under your chin, and not sitting over your jawbone. The helmet should be firm on your head. Try to tip it and rotate it on your head. Your scalp should move as you move the helmet. If the helmet tips sideways, backwards or forwards, it is too loose.

Sizing pads are for fine tuning and comfort, not to make a big helmet smaller.

The labelling to look for



Most helmets on sale in New Zealand are covered by one of three standards: the Australia/New Zealand Joint Standard (AS/NZS2063), the American Snell standard or the American Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).

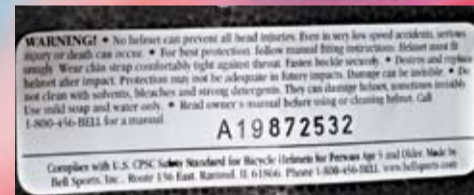
Helmets certified to the AS/NZ Standard carry the Australian tick mark or the New Zealand S mark.



"Certified" means helmets from every batch have been tested and verified by an independent audit process to ensure all the requirements of the standard have been met. It also means the manufacturer's quality control procedures have been checked. Products cannot carry the tick mark or S mark without certification.



Some helmets are not certified, but carry the words "made to" or "meets the standard". This means they may not have been tested, so you have only the manufacturer's word that they are as good as they say.



6 things you should never do

DANGEROUS!
Never wear a cap under your helmet. This ruins the proper fit. In an accident, the helmet may not stay on. If you want sun protection, buy a helmet with a visor.



DANGEROUS!
Never wear the helmet on the back of your head. A helmet worn like this exposes your forehead and face to the road, and also means you risk being strangled by the strap.



DANGEROUS!
Never wear a helmet with the straps loose. It won't stay in place, but it could catch and strangle you.



DANGEROUS!
Never buy a helmet for a child to "grow into". Do you think the accident is going to wait till the helmet fits?



DANGEROUS!
Never buy a helmet second-hand. It might look okay, but you have no idea if it has been damaged.



DANGEROUS!
Never wear a helmet after it has been in an accident or has been bashed around. Cracks in the cover, cracked or crushed padding and frayed straps all indicate it's time for a new helmet.

Even if you can't see any damage, a really good whack will ruin a helmet's protective qualities. For this reason, kids' helmets should be replaced every couple of years or so: it's almost certain they will have been dropped and bashed too often.



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