



Catholic Healthcare West

**Ask the Expert**  
*Arizona Republic*

**Luis Perez, M.D.**

**Q: My daughter received a bike for Christmas. Is it for her to wear a helmet?**

**A:** Yes! According to the Children's Safety Network, 62.6 percent of bicycle fatalities in 2000 were the result of a head injury. While this statistic is shocking, the good news is when an individual properly wears a helmet approved by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), the risk of head injury is reduced by as much as 85 percent and the risk of brain injury by as much as 88 percent.

A bicycle crash can happen at any time. More children between the ages of five and 14 go to an emergency room for injuries associated with bicycles than with any other sport, and many of these injuries involve the head. Wearing a helmet can make a life-saving difference for anyone riding a bike, and they aren't expensive. A good bicycle helmet can be found for around \$20. When you purchase a helmet, be sure it fits snugly on you or your child's head and is slightly shifted forward when secured with the chin strap. All helmets require approval from the CPSC, and you'll want to be sure to select one that shows this approval on the label.

It's a good idea to bring your child with you when purchasing a helmet to make sure it fits appropriately. Your child may not be too excited about having to wear a helmet, so let him pick out the style, color or design he likes and be sure to explain to him why it is so important to wear a helmet every time he gets on his bike.

Everyone – adults and children alike – should wear bicycle helmets each time they ride. Helmets are the single most effective way to prevent head injuries resulting from bicycle crashes, and wearing a helmet on each ride can encourage the same smart behavior in others.

For additional tips on how to correctly wear a bicycle helmet, please visit <http://www.cpsc.gov/kids/kidsafety/correct.html>.

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