

Biking to school safely

Biking to school can be a great way for kids to get exercise, develop confidence and learn to share the road safely with motorists and other people on bikes. Before encouraging your child to get on their bike, there are a few things to consider:

Keep safe

Ensure your child has the right cycling skills to get to school safely on a bike. Always ride with your child if they're under 10 and then continue until you're sure they have the skills and confidence to ride in traffic.

Encourage your children to undertake cycle skills training so they are prepared to ride on the road. Talk to your local council about cycle skills training in your area.

The training includes the following skills:

- Turning and signalling skills away from traffic, then on quiet streets to improve traffic awareness.
- Recognising potential hazards and how to choose good places to ride.
- Riding in a straight line, at least one metre from parked cars, and using cycle lanes wherever possible.
- Watching for potential hazards including car doors, potholes, rubbish, grates and pedestrians.

The bike

Ensure your child's bike is the right size and fit. They must be able to:

- With hands on the handlebar, place the balls of both feet on the ground when sitting on the seat.
- Comfortably stand with two feet flat on the ground when straddling the centre bar.
- Easily grasp the hand brakes and apply enough pressure to stop the bike.

Bikes must have brakes and reflectors, and front and rear lights need to be on when it's dim or dark.

The helmet

Cycle helmets must be worn and meet an approved standard. Before your child sets off on their bike, ensure the helmet is securely fastened, in good condition and not cracked or damaged. Make sure it's the right size, with little or no wobble when fitted. To learn more, check out the Bike Wise Bike & Helmet Check pocket pamphlet: www.tinyurl.com/bikehelmetcheck



Have your child wear bright or high visibility clothing or a high-vis backpack cover and have front and rear lights for night time or low light and rain.

If an adult is cycling with young children, keep an eye out. If there's one adult, riding at the back is best. If there is more than one adult, have one at the front and one at the back.

Plan the route

Map out a safe route to school from home. Choose a way through side streets, with other kids on bikes, low traffic speeds and good visibility. Ride with your child and make sure they understand the route – have them lead to show you they know where they're going.

Sharing the road

It's important to ride with courtesy and respect for motorists and other people on bikes.

Ensure your child knows to be visible at all times, clearly show their intentions and thank other road users when they can. For example, you can show them how to let motorists or other cyclists know you're happy they've waited for you by waving, smiling, or giving them a 'thumbs up'. This will make sharing the road easier for everyone.

Try not to hold up the flow of traffic. If necessary, pull over to allow vehicles to pass.

Teach your child the road rules. Check out the Official New Zealand Code for Cyclists for more: www.nzta.govt.nz/resources/roadcode/cyclist-code/

Weather

Help your child check the weather conditions before each bike ride. If they are cycling in wet or low light conditions, ensure they wear high visibility and reflective clothing.

Carrying gear?

Don't hang anything from the handlebars – it could throw them off balance or get stuck in the wheels and cause a crash.

Keep healthy

Did you know 10% of all Kiwi children between two and 14 years-old are overweight and at greater risk of Type 2 diabetes, according to the Ministry of Health. Get your children into fun, healthy habits like cycling that last a lifetime.

