

## **Bicycle Safety**

Riding around my town recently, I noticed several children riding bicycles--not one was wearing a helmet. I realize that many parents purchase helmets for their children and encourage their children to wear these helmets. Perhaps some of these children are leaving their home with the helmet on, only to drive down the street to hide it behind a bush. I'm not sure how "cool" helmets are considered to be among the younger crowd these days.

If you don't have a helmet for your child to wear, get one. If you do have a helmet for your child to wear, enforce the wearing of it. I realize that it may well be difficult to do this, but enforcing it may well save your child's life.

What can you do to "win the battle" of the bicycle helmet?

- Talk with your child about bicycle safety. Many communities have biking clubs or safety organizations that maintain information about bike safety. Some even provide free helmets! If you aren't sure where to find these providers, contact your local police department or a bicycle shop. They will be happy to get this information to you.
- Communicate with your neighbors. Nowadays, it seems that only the children are networked with one another. Begin networking with your neighbors. Let them know that you want your child to wear a helmet and that, if they see your child not wearing it, you would appreciate a call. Often, people are reluctant to get involved with "other people's" children. Let them know that you want them to get involved and occasionally, ask them if they have noticed your child wearing his helmet.
- Advise your child that you consider these safety measures to be important and why. Let them know that you have talked with the neighbors and that, periodically, you will be riding around the neighborhood yourself. If they are discovered to be without their helmet, they will lose the privilege of riding their bike for a period of time (e.g. one week). Expect your child to tell you how embarrassed they are about this. Expect them to tell you how no one else's parents are doing this. Tell them they should wear their helmet to avoid embarrassment.
- Wear a helmet yourself when riding a bike! Example is often the best teacher.

Network with your neighbors, set a good example, and "checkup" on your child--you may well save their life.