

# Bicycles are great summer fun, but they're more than just toys

*Following rules of the road and taking protective measures can help make cycling a safe, enjoyable activity for all*

**W**ell, I think it's safe to put the snow blower away in the garage. I remember last year when it snowed in May—but that's not going to happen this year, right. Right??? Come on everybody; say it with me!

That's better. And now since we've ensured that spring is here and summer is just around the corner, it's time to haul our summer-time toys out of the garage, dust 'em off and go play.

Me, I'm going to get my bicycle, as are thousands of other Manitobans now that the streets are dry and calling our names. But before we answer that siren bicycle song, we need to dust off our bicycle safety facts, too.

And I'm not just talking about kids. Adults need to be as aware of bicycle safety as children; vehicles don't discriminate, and are as capable of hitting an adult as a child.

Bicycles are more than just toys. The 1999 Traffic Collision Statistics Report



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from Manitoba Transportation and Government Services reports there were 273 cyclists injured and one cyclist killed in collisions between cars and bikes in 1999. I repeat; these are not toys.

So, let's talk about how you can enjoy touring around on your bicycle and still be in one piece at the end of the day. The general rules of bicycle safety apply to both adults and children, so I'll wait while you gather the family around the coffee table...

## **Ride on the right**

Ready? OK. First rule: always ride on the right hand side of the road, traveling in the same direction as the other traffic. Drivers know that rule, too, and are

subsequently more likely to see you there because they are expecting to see you there. Remember, though, that riding on the right puts you at risk of getting "doored" (when someone in a parked car opens the driver's door directly in front of you), so make sure you keep a good eye on what's ahead of you.

Number two: wear a properly fitting helmet. Studies have shown that bicycle helmets can reduce head injuries (the most serious kind of bicycle injury) by up to 85 per cent. So why wouldn't you wear one?? Oh, and Mom and Dad, while you're nodding and telling your kids I'm absolutely right, I'd like to remind you that your head needs protecting, too. I can't count the number of times I've seen a family out for a bike ride, kids in helmets, parents not. You are one of the biggest influencers of your children: please remember that.

Now let's chat a bit about your bikes. It is important to check your tires, bicycle seat, reflectors, etc. to prevent

accidents and to make sure everything is in proper working order. If your bike is falling apart underneath you, you're going to end up in trouble at some point. Parents, you should check your child's bike before each and every outing.

## **Remember hand signals**

And how about those hand signals? You remember those, right? Pop quiz: What's the hand signal for a right turn? Here's an easy way to remember: stick your left arm straight out at a 90-degree angle to your body, then bend your elbow and point your hand straight in the air. Your arm should look like an "L." (Now just remember that "L" DOESN'T mean left and you'll be fine!)

Just to finish off the arm signals lesson, indicate "STOP" by dropping your left hand straight down by your side, the palm of your hand facing the traffic behind you. Tell drivers you're turning left by straightening your left

arm out at a 90-degree angle, palm facing the road.

You know, I just realized that we're nearing the end of the column, but we certainly haven't neared the end of the topic. Stay tuned for a few more lessons on cycling safety. Parents, if you're looking for specific information on protecting your children, I invite you to check out MPI's web site at [www.mpi.mb.ca](http://www.mpi.mb.ca). There's a wealth of information there. And one more thing: motorists, you are just as responsible for cycling safety as the cyclists. Please give them the respect (and the space) they deserve.

That's it for this week. Until next week, be **RoadWise**.

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