



## **Bike Helmets and Protective Helmets for Children with Disabilities or Health Care Needs**

### **Bike Helmets**

Children with disabilities or health care needs can and must wear approved and properly fitted bike helmets when using a conventional or adapted bike. Adapted bikes include a wide variety of commercially available options that make it possible for many children to enjoy the bike riding experience with families and friends. Even if a child is not able to ride a bike or an adapted bike, use of a bike trailer could be an option, but safety considerations need to be carefully considered and reviewed before use.



Having disabilities or health care needs does not exclude a child from using bike helmets to prevent head and spinal cord and/or other secondary injuries. Parents and care providers also need to remember that they are important role models for all children and need to wear bike helmets, too, for every bike ride.

Some guidelines for selection and use of a bike helmet for a child with disabilities or health care needs include the following:

- 1. Check with your child's physician about his readiness and abilities to ride a bike and to wear a bike helmet. *Also ask:***
  - a. Is my child able to safely wear a bike helmet?
  - b. If your child is bald, ask your child's physician about whether or not he/she would recommend putting a helmet on the child's head. Use of a skull cap or bandana placed onto the child's bald head first may be an option before putting on the helmet to help provide added comfort and protection from sweat and sun exposure.
- 2. Investigate use of conventional bike helmets to see if a proper fit can be achieved.** At the Riley Safety Store, you are able to purchase bike helmets at low cost. Riley Safety Store staff also provides your child with a customized and proper fitting of a bike helmet along with instruction and education on where to find different types of adapted bikes and safety basics.
- 3. If a more customized fitting of a bike helmet is required, consider:**
  - a. Most new bike helmets come with foam inserts that can be secured inside the helmet at different points to create a more snug fit to the helmet to your child's head.

- b. Use the size (circumference) of your child's head (not age) as a guide for identifying helmet size. Depending on the nature of a child's growth, development, disability, or health care need, the size of the helmet needed can and will vary for each child.
  - c. There are bike helmets for head sizes that may be challenging, such as for a child with a very large head or very small head. Toddler-sized bike helmets also may work for some children with very small heads, regardless of age
4. **To prepare for a safe bike ride, also keep in mind:**
- a. How can you and your child carry essential medical information while bike riding?
  - b. Have you used sunscreen to protect you and your child from sun exposure? Remember to use sunscreen with at least a 15 SPF, to cover all exposed skin areas, and to use repeatedly.
  - c. Don't forget to make frequent stops to stay rested and to pack water to keep everyone refreshed and well-hydrated.
  - d. And most important, make time to review bike safety basics with all members of your family and that all bikes are in working order before going out to ride.

**For more information and resources:**

1. Visit: <http://rileychildrenshospital.com/parents-and-patients/wellness-center/commed/adapted-bikes.jsp> for more information about adapted bikes and Riley Hospital's Pedal Power Program.
2. Visit: <http://rileychildrenshospital.com/parents-and-patients/wellness-center/commed/bike-course-manual.jsp> to download a free bike course manual from Riley Hospital Community Education and Child Advocacy Child Advocacy that provides an overview of bike safety basics
3. Bell's King-Head Helmet is a XXX Large helmet, fitting sizes 8 to 8 ¼. You can find the Bell's King-Head Helmet, for individuals with larger heads that may not be able to fit in a traditional sized helmet, at the Bell Store, <http://www.thebellstore.com> or by calling 800-552-3678. Bell's King-Head Helmet also is available through the Riley Safety Store, <http://rileychildrenshospital.com/parents-and-patients/wellness-center/commed/safety-store.jsp> or call the Riley Safety Store toll-free at 1-888-365-2022.
4. Visit: <http://www.skullcapcity.com/> and <http://www.crownwear.com/headliner.asp> for examples of skull caps that can be used to cover a bald head before putting on a bike helmet or visit or call the Riley Safety Store for more information about related products.
5. The Medical Information Carrier system has an internal pouch for including a child's medical information on a medical information sheet slipped inside a plastic carrier envelop secured inside the bike helmet. For more information, visit: <http://www.meds.org/bikehelmet.php> or visit or call the Riley Safety Store for more information about this product and other related products.

## **Protective Helmets**

There are many different types of protective helmets for individuals with disabilities or health care needs. Protective helmets provide protection for people who are at high risk of injuring themselves because of seizures, falls, or other behaviors. Be aware of and use a protective helmet for its intended purpose as indicated by the manufacturer. Do not use a bike helmet as a replacement for what a protective helmet is designed to do. It is especially important to wear the helmet that is based on your child's need. Wearing a helmet that for something other than its recommended purpose may actually cause more injury rather than preventing injury.



Below is a list of some of the different manufacturers that provide protective helmets for children with disabilities or health care needs:

### **Protective Headgear**

Danmar Products	Offers a variety of specialty helmets to be used for individuals with disabilities as well as athletes, and custom fits each helmet.	800-783-1998 Website: <a href="http://www.danmarproducts.com">http://www.danmarproducts.com</a>
Epilepsy Ontario	Produces helmets for both children and adults that are light weight. Their products may protective individuals with epilepsy, poor balance, autism, and many other disabilities from	(905) 764-5099 Website: <a href="http://epilepsyontario.org">http://epilepsyontario.org</a> Email: <a href="mailto:info@epilepsyontario.org">info@epilepsyontario.org</a>
Plum Enterprises Inc.	Provides protective headgear for toddlers through adults that need head protection for varies reasons including head injury, surgery, seizures etc.	800-321-PLUM Website: <a href="http://www.plument.com/index.htm">http://www.plument.com/index.htm</a>
Sammons Preston Patterson Medical	Offers a variety of adapted helmets including both hard shell and soft shell.	800-323-5547 Website: <a href="http://www.sammonspreston.com/">http://www.sammonspreston.com/</a> Email: <a href="mailto:CustomerSupport@Patterson-Medical.com">CustomerSupport@Patterson-Medical.com</a>
Flaghouse	Offers a variety of adapted helmets for children and adults with special health care needs.	800-793-7900 or 201-288-7600 Website <a href="http://www.flaghouse.com">http://www.flaghouse.com</a> Email: <a href="mailto:sales@flaghouse.com">sales@flaghouse.com</a>

**For additional information and resources:**

Visit the Riley Safety Store to learn more about the Heads Up Program, made possible by funding support from Autism Advocates of Indiana and The Riley Cheer Guild. The Heads Up Program is a unique partnership between the Riley Safety Store and the Riley Hospital Occupational Therapy Department where children are assessed and fitted by therapists for a protective helmet and then able to obtain the protective helmet through the Riley Safety Store. For more information, call 1-888-365-2022 (toll-free).

Information for this flyer was compiled by Donna Suttles, BSW Intern with Riley Community Education and Child Advocacy, 2008.