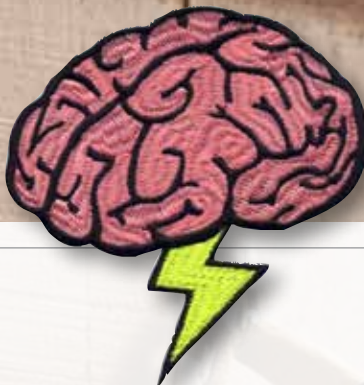


HELMETS



HOW TO FIT A HELMET: BUY IT, FIT IT, WEAR IT!

by Karen Maciejko, RN, BSN, *Trauma Program Manager, Aspen Valley Hospital*



Buy it. Fit it. Wear it!

The most important thing you can do to prevent brain trauma is to always wear a helmet when you are skiing, snowboarding, riding a road or mountain bike, or any other sport where helmets are recommended.

Proper Helmet Fit

Like hats, helmets come in various sizes, and size can vary from manufacturer to manufacturer. Ensuring the proper fit is essential to letting the helmet do its work for you if you have an accident. Here are the steps to fit both ski and bike helmets for kids and adults. It may take a bit of time to get it just right, so stick with it. Having someone else adjust the straps or looking in the mirror usually makes things easier.



Step 1 – Find Your Size

Start by measuring your head to find your size, then try on helmets in your size until one feels right. Place the helmet level on your head and adjust the sizing as needed until the helmet is snug. Some helmets have a dial at the back and others have a self-adjusting tension strap.



Step 2 – Helmet Position

The helmet should sit level on your head and low on your forehead – no more than two finger-widths should be visible above your eyebrow. If you are helping someone else, be sure to use their fingers.



Step 3 – Side Straps

The straps should form a “V” shape under, and slightly in front of, the ears. Some helmets have a fixed connection and others have an adjustable slider to lock the straps in this position.

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Step 4 – Buckles

On most helmets, the straps can be pulled from the back of the helmet to lengthen or shorten the chin straps. Adjust to center the left buckle under the chin. It's easier if you take the helmet off to make these adjustments.



Step 5 – Chin Strap

Once you have adjusted the side straps, it's time to buckle your chin strap. Tighten the strap until it is snug, so that no more than one or two fingers fit under the strap. You should be able to chew gum comfortably.



Step 6 – Check Your Work

Check these three points to ensure you have a proper fit.

1. Open your mouth wide, like taking a big yawn. Your helmet should pull down on your head. If not, go back and tighten the chin strap.
2. Does your helmet slide back more than two fingers above your eyebrows? If so, unbuckle and shorten the front strap by moving the slider forward. Buckle and retighten the chin strap, and test again.
3. Does your helmet slide forward into your eyes? If so, unbuckle and re-tighten the back strap by moving the slider back toward the ear. Buckle and retighten the chin strap, and test again.



Helmet fitting model, Tobias Andrade, was born at Aspen Valley Hospital.

helmet immediately, even if no damage is visible. Check the guidelines in your owner's manual for further information. Parents, check in with your kids and ask them to let you know if they need a new helmet.

Now You're Ready to Roll!

When to Replace a Helmet

If you have been in a crash while riding your bike, you need to replace it right away; damage is not always visible, and a damaged helmet will not offer you sufficient protection. For snow helmets, if you fall and the helmet is impacted, you should have the helmet inspected or replace the

Buy For Now

Parents, buy a helmet that fits your child's head now, not a helmet they will "grow into."

Comfort and Style

If you buy a helmet that you find comfortable and attractive, you are more likely to wear it. Check your helmet fit before each ride and adjust as necessary to ensure the helmet fits properly. Like shoes or gloves, the straps can stretch a bit with wear.

Be a Role Model for Safe Behavior

Everyone – adult and child – should wear a helmet each time they ride, ski or engage in an activity where helmets are recommended. Wearing a helmet each time can encourage the same smart behavior in others.

Helmet Certification

Bicycle and ski helmets sold in the U.S. must meet the standards issued by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). Look for the certification label inside the helmet.

Helmet Program

As part of Aspen Valley Hospital's mission to *foster our community as the healthiest in the nation*, we provide ski and bike helmet fittings by appointment at the Hospital and at local community events. We also provide helmets at no cost to community members who need them. If you need a helmet or already have a helmet and are unsure about your or your child's fit, please contact me to schedule an appointment.

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As Aspen Valley Hospital's Trauma Program Manager, Karen has fit bike and snow helmets on every age, size and shape of head at the Hospital and at community events throughout the Roaring Fork Valley, where she is an advocate for trauma prevention. In her free time, Karen explores the mountains with her dog, Asa.