

## Cycling with your child – try the route

Children who cycle are confident, more independent and arrive at school ready to learn. Just 15 minutes of cycling to and from school can increase your child's fitness and establish life-long healthy habits. Ask any child how they want to get to school and they will reply – on my bike!

Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring that their children have an adequate level of riding ability to be able to manage themselves safely.

We recommend that you simulate your child's trip a few times to and from school before their first independent trip. It is important to know the route your children will take. You can learn about the challenges they may experience by travelling the route together and assisting them to overcome those challenges.

### Plan your route to school

- Plan the safest route between your house and school. Use off-road pathways where available.
- Minimise road crossings.
- Check the route regularly for any changes such as construction sites and road works.
- Use pedestrian and supervised crossings when available.

When you travel the route with your child, discuss how they can be safe on their journey. Things like looking ahead, being aware, keeping left, being careful around driveways and reversing cars, and giving way to pedestrians.

### Teach your child how to cross the road safely!

- Dismount to cross the road.
- Stop at the edge of road.
- Look both ways for traffic (right, left, right)
- Listen, can you hear any cars?
- Think is it safe to cross?
- Is there anything else that makes crossing dangerous?

### Can I cycle on the pathway?

Cycling is permitted on all pathways except if otherwise signed.

- Keep to the left of the pathway and on designated crossings.
- Always give way to pedestrians.
- When approaching pedestrians slow down, sound your bell and pass on the right.
- Watch for cars when crossing driveways, and if they don't see you, brake and wait.
- Be predictable by walking, scooting or skating in a smooth line.

### Hints and tips

- Remind your children to dismount at intersections and cross roads, and walk their bikes across the road
- Familiarise your child with the bike storage area for your school, and which entry to use at the school
- Ensure they use their bike lock – write the combination to their lock inside their school bag
- Try and buddy up with other children who live nearby to travel together.
- If your younger child is under the supervision of your older child, discuss the importance of staying together.

## **Will cycling with a heavy bag cause back problems?**

Children should carry no more than 10 percent of their body weight. This is about 4kg for the average 11-12 year old. A good backpack, worn correctly, will help spread the weight considerably. You could consider fitting your child's bicycle with a rack or panniers.

## **Keep the bike safe**

- Check the brakes, tyres, chain and handlebars regularly and maintain as required.
- Ensure there is a safe place to lock the bike at school.
- Ensure your child knows the combination to the lock, or where the key is.

Remember children need at least one hour of physical activity a day.

It's important to make time available so you and your children can get some exercise.