



Information

Position Statement on Cycling Safety

MISSION

The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA) mission is to deliver and administer health services in the Winnipeg Region and to promote and protect health. The WRHA will improve health and well-being by leading Winnipeg's health services and building partnerships with the community.

VISION

The WRHA's vision is to lead with innovative and cost effective health education and injury prevention programs. The WRHA will have a holistic approach that embraces all the factors that influence health and well-being. The WRHA will work with people and communities and will lead effective partnerships with other health care providers, the government and the public.

HEALTH

Health is more than merely the absence of disease. It includes a state of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being.

WRHA POSITION

- Because there have been 10 cycling deaths between 1992 and 1999, and 724 cycling hospitalizations between 1992 and 2001 (72 per year) within the Winnipeg Health Region (WHR);
- And because an average of 39 potential years of life are lost per cycling death;
- And because cycling injuries result in an average length of stay of 5.4 days, and 6.6 days if the injury was the result of collision with a motor vehicle (i.e. approximately 390 WHR bed days per year)
- And because a variety of effective mechanisms to prevent cycling injuries exist that are not currently in place in the WHR;
- And because cycling is an activity that promotes fitness, general health and mental health;





Information

The WRHA supports effective comprehensive action toward promoting safe cycling including efforts to

- decrease cycling injuries through all-age provincial bicycle helmet legislation
- develop safer cycling environments
- provide cyclist and driver education
- increase cycling rates for general health benefits.

To that end, the WRHA is committed to

- Supporting provincial all-age mandatory bike helmet legislation.
- Working with partners to increase the accessibility of bike helmets where cost may present a barrier.
- Working with partners to establish safer cycling routes emphasizing the separation of cyclist traffic from motor vehicle traffic wherever possible.
- Working with partners to educate both cyclists and motorists regarding safe cycling practices (such as helmet use, rider visibility, riding skills, bicycle maintenance), and driver caution (vigilance, courtesy).
- Promoting the awareness and enforcement of traffic regulations pertaining to both drivers and cyclists.
- Utilizing a variety of communication vehicles to promote cycling as a means to include physical activity in the daily lives of WHR residents.

Background Information to WRHA Position Statement on Cycling Safety

Bicycle injury statistics

- Bicycle crashes result in 2 to 4 deaths in Manitoba annually, most commonly due to head injuries suffered as a result of bicycle-motor vehicle collisions.
- Seventeen cycling deaths occurred in Manitoba between 1992-1999, of which 16 involved motor vehicle traffic. Ten of the deaths (59%) were residents of the WHR.





Information

- The 17 deaths represent 664 potential years of life lost before the age of 75.
- There were 7 childhood and 10 adult fatalities (including 4 adults aged 85 and over).
- The peak cycling injury death rate was experienced by males 85 years and over (9.1/100,000) followed by males aged 10-14 (0.9/100,000).
- There were 1,427 cycling injury hospital admissions in Manitoba from 1992-2001, 724 (51%) of which were residents of the WHR.
- The provincial average length of stay for cycling injury admissions was 5.4 days (6.6 for bicycle-motor vehicle collisions, 5.1 for other cycling injuries).
- For children in the WHR 5-9 years of age, bicycle injuries are the third leading cause of injury hospitalization and the fourth for children aged 10-14.
- There are 250-300 bicycle-related traffic injuries reported to law enforcement every year in Manitoba.
- Every year approximately 60 cyclists 5-14 years of age and 30-50 cyclists 25-34 years of age are injured riding on public roads as reported to law enforcement (the peak ages reported)
- An average of two children are treated for bicycle injuries daily during summer months at the Winnipeg Children's Hospital and helmets were not worn by over 60% of the children injured.
- In the absence of provincial bicycle helmet legislation, helmet use has increased but remains low in the WHR and surrounds (from 21% in 1996 to 36% in 2004).
- Teens and those living in poorer neighbourhoods have the lowest rates of bicycle helmet use.

Benefits of bike helmet legislation

- Bicycle helmets reduce the risk of head injury by up to 85% and brain injury by up to 88%. Currently, B.C., Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and P.E.I. have helmet legislation for all ages, while Ontario and Alberta have helmet legislation for children only.
- Legislation is effective in significantly increasing bicycle helmet use rates (e.g. up to 80% use in Nova Scotia post-legislation).





Information

- Cycling head injury hospitalizations for children decreased 45% between 1994-1998 in the provinces with helmet legislation compared to a 27% reduction in provinces without such legislation.
- Helmet legislation does not appear to decrease bike ridership as previously speculated. A study in Ontario documented no change in the prevalence of cycling before and after legislation. The 45% reduction in head injuries in provinces with helmet legislation was not accompanied by a comparable decrease in other injuries, indicating that the reduction in head injury was unlikely to be due to decreased rates of cycling (exposure).
- Effective helmet legislation requires the correct use of a certified bicycle helmet by riders and passengers of all ages, on public roads, sidewalks, and bicycle paths.
- To achieve maximum compliance, bicycle helmet legislation must be accompanied by a comprehensive enforcement program with public awareness and education and significant penalties for noncompliance.

Other potential cycling safety measures

- Separation of cycling traffic from motor vehicle traffic (e.g. bike paths, bike lanes).
- Rider visibility- light or bright coloured clothing, bike and helmet and lights/reflectors/reflective clothing at night.
- Enhancing rider skill level and driver vigilance.
- Lower motor vehicle speed.
- Traffic regulations and enforcement that supports cycling.

Accessibility of Cycling

- In 1995, 46% of preschoolers chose biking as a form of active play. Children and adolescents age 5 -17 listed biking as one of their top popular activities to engage in, with 86% of them participating in biking at least once in the last 12 months. 47% of adults list bicycling as one of their top 12 popular activities.
- In 1992, more than half of all Canadian households had at least one adult-sized bicycle.





Information

- Cycling is accessible to people across a wide age span. Almost one in ten active cycling commuters are 50 years or over.
- 24% of Canadians chose to cycle whenever possible.

Benefits of physical activity and cycling (also see WRHA Position Statement on Healthy Living)

Improved Health and Reduction in the Burden of Illness

- Participation in regular physical activity is associated with positive health outcomes, improved physical fitness, and physical, mental and social health.
- Moderate intensity exercise such as cycling assists weight management and smoking cessation, reduces levels of depression and stresses, improves mood, raises levels of self esteem and relieves symptoms of premenstrual syndrome.
- Active transportation (cycling, walking, and public transportation) incorporates physical activity into regular, sustainable lifestyle behaviors.

Cost

- Increased physical activity is a cost-effective public health strategy.
- Incorporating incidental physical activity into daily routine has been found to be more cost effective than physical activity achieved through structured exercise programs.
- Cycling is an affordable means of transportation. It costs an average of \$7,000 per year to own and operate a car, but only \$150 annually to own and operate a bike.

Employee Health

- Exercise has been shown to have an impact on improving worker productivity and a positive effective on reducing workplace absenteeism. Encouraging commuting to work by bicycling and walking can be a cost-effective means for companies to improve the health of their employees.





Information

Environmental Benefit

- Cycling and walking are two of the cleanest and most energy efficient forms of transportation.
- Increased cycling reduces traffic volumes and vehicle emissions, which benefits air quality and environmental health.

