Helmet safety

Helmets protect you during sports and activities where falls or impacts can happen. They are recommended for people of all ages and skill levels. Children are more likely to wear helmets when they see adults wearing helmets.

How helmets protect you

Helmets help protect against serious head injuries, like traumatic brain injuries and skull fractures. These injuries can seriously affect your quality of life and the way you walk, talk, play, and think. Wearing a well-fitted helmet designed for the activity can help protect your head by absorbing some of the force from a fall or impact.

Tips for choosing the right helmet

Match the helmet to the activity

Each helmet is designed to protect you in a different way. For example, skateboard helmets cover more of the back of the head than bicycle helmets, because you are more likely to fall backward while skateboarding than while biking.

Understand impact protection

Helmets are built to handle different types of impact. It's important to know whether yours is made for single impact or multiple impacts.

Single-impact helmets are designed to protect you from one major hit.

- Must be replaced after an impact, even if there is no visible damage.
- Examples include: bike helmets and ski or snowboard helmets

Multi-impact helmets are designed to absorb repeated impacts safely.

- Can withstand more than one hit but must be replaced if there is any damage visible.
- Examples include: baseball, football, lacrosse, skateboarding and hockey helmets

Both single impact and multi-impact helmets should be replaced when the helmet:

- no longer fits properly
- has a crack or dent
- has straps that are damaged, torn or don't work
- no longer meets the current safety standards

Check for certification labels

Before buying a hockey, ski or snowboard helmet, check for certification marks that confirm it meets the safety standards for the intended sport. Health Canada requires certification labels, that can be found on either the inside or outside of these helmets, as follows:

- **Hockey helmets:** Look for the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) mark on hockey helmets, face protectors and visors.
- **Ski and snowboard helmets:** Accepted safety standards include EN 1077, ASTM F2040, Snell RS-98 and CSA Z263.1.

Don't use helmets with worn out, missing or incompatible parts

- Before using a helmet, check that all parts, straps and buckles are secure and work properly.
- Check that the helmet has no cracks, dents or visible damage.
- If you're using a face protector, make sure it's compatible with your helmet and comes with the right hardware to attach the face protector to the helmet.

> Be cautious with **used helmets**. Don't buy a used helmet if you're unsure about the helmet's history (how old it is, if it's been in an accident, if it's damaged).

Stay informed

Before buying, check for product recalls at Canada.ca/recalls.

You can also report an incident involving a helmet or other consumer product at Canada.ca/report-a-product.

How to wear a helmet properly

Take these steps to make sure the helmet is the right fit for you or your child.

- Fit the helmet snugly on the head. It should not rock or twist.
  - Helmets should not be big enough for a child to “grow into.”
  - If you wear a hijab, adjust your helmet to make sure it fits snugly and stays in place over the fabric.
  - Certified helmets are available for children who wear their hair wrapped in a patka.
- For bicycle helmets:
  - Make sure the helmet sits low on the forehead (2 finger widths above the eyebrows).
  - Adjust the straps to form a V-shape underneath and slightly forward of the ears.
  - Tighten the chinstrap, only 1 finger should fit under the chin.

Safety reminders

- Always make sure that the helmet buckle is securely fastened so that the helmet can’t fall off.
- Don’t modify your helmet, visor or face protector. It’s not safe to drill holes, paste stickers or repaint them.
- Don’t wear toques, baseball hats, large hair clips, or headphones under a helmet.
- Keep ponytails low at the neck when wearing a helmet.

Other protective gear for sports and activities

Along with your helmet, make sure to wear the recommended safety gear for the sport or activity. The right gear may include:

- face protector
- wrist guards
- elbow pads
- knee pads
- shin guards
- cleated shoes

Inspect your gear regularly to make sure it's the right size and is in good condition.

Learn more: Canada.ca/product-safety

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