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Kids: Helmets are required for that, too!

Salem, OR — Skateboard? Scooter? Inline skates? Yes, you must wear a helmet if you are under 16. With students heading back to school, the Oregon Department of Transportation is reminding youngsters and parents: helmets are the safe way to go — and they are also required by law.

"Studies consistently show that wearing a bicycle helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by up to 85 percent," said Sue Riehl, Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety program coordinator at ODOT. "Parents setting the example by making it a riding habit is one of the best ways to encourage young people to wear their helmets, but reminding them about the law doesn't hurt!"

The fine for not wearing a helmet is \$25, and while the child may get the ticket, the family may be held responsible for paying it. So how can you encourage a youngster to wear a helmet? The Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute (www.bhsi.org) offers these tips:

- 1. Establish the helmet habit early when your children get their first bikes.** If they learn to wear helmets whenever they ride it will become a habit for a lifetime.
- 2. Let them pick the helmet out.** If they make the decision they are more likely to buy into the idea; some parents buy their child a new helmet every year so they are excited to wear it.
- 3. Encourage their friends to wear helmets.** Peer pressure can be used in a positive way if several families in the neighborhood start making helmet use a regular habit at the same time.
- 4. Give your child a course in bike safety,** using a guide such as the Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute's [Teaching Your Child to Ride A Bicycle](#). Placing the helmet in the context of a safety program helps underscore why you are requiring it. It is not enough to put a helmet on the child and send them off without some basic safety instruction.

You might also point out how many other sports require helmets, like football, baseball (when at bat), race car drivers, hockey players and bicycle racers. Finally, and perhaps most important, *don't let them ride their bikes, scooters, skateboards and skates unless they wear their helmets*. Several Web sites offer guidance for riding bikes or walking to school safely including www.saferoutesinfo.org; www.walknbike.org; and <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/> (under Traffic Safety menu, go to Bicycles).

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