



Physiotherapists:
The Body Specialists

Physio Tips

BIKING

Physiotherapy Association of BC

BICYCLING

Bicycle riding is one of the easiest ways to stay fit, promote cardiovascular health and improve muscular endurance. However, a correct bike fit is absolutely essential. In a one-hour bike ride, the average cyclist completes over 3000 strokes. A bike that doesn't fit the rider can easily create pain.

A properly fitted frame size, alignment of the pedal and foot, position of the handlebars and saddle height promotes good posture, with all muscle groups working together in harmony.

For an injury free ride Physiotherapists recommend:

FRAME SIZE - Stand over your bicycle's top tube (between the saddle and the handlebar). The general rule-of-thumb for road biking is to have roughly one inch of clearance between your buttocks and the frame. For mountain biking on trails, you should have two to six inches depending on the terrain and the slope on which you are riding so that you are compact and can put your feet down quickly.

SADDLE POSITION AND HEIGHT –The saddle should be level for endurance and recreational riding. If you are sliding forward from a forward-tilting saddle, your arms and back will be taking too much weight. If the seat is tilted backwards, you may place undue strain on your low back and may experience discomfort or pain in the saddle area.

Saddle height should be set so your legs are not quite fully extended at the bottom of each pedal stroke. The straight leg should have a slight bend in the knee, roughly 30-degrees. If you have to shift your seat with each stroke, your saddle is too high and needs to be lowered. A bicycle seat too low will create stress on your knees; and too high will increase stress on your lower spine.

HANDLEBAR POSITION –The handlebar position can make a difference to the comfort of your back and upper body while riding. Handlebars that are too low or too far forward force you to stretch and bend down too far, placing undue stress on your back and neck. Higher handlebars will have you put more

weight through the saddle. Generally, taller riders should have lower handlebars in relation to the height of the saddle. Also ensure you have the correct distance between the seat and handlebars. If it is inadequate, your neck muscles may become strained.

SHOE/CLEAT ALIGNMENT – If you ride your bike with clipless pedals, the position of the cleats on your cycling shoes determines the comfort of your feet, ankles, knees, hips and back. Misaligned cleats can put stress through all joints from your foot to your low back with every pedal stroke. Your feet should point straight ahead when clipped into the pedals and you should have a little bit of 'float' or sideways movement between the pedal and the cleat to allow your joints to follow a natural pedal stroke. The rule-of-thumb is to continue adjusting the cleats until you feel no torsional, or twisting, stress in your leg as you pedal.

If you are injured from cycling consult your physiotherapist.

Physiotherapists are experts in movement and mobility, body mechanics, muscles and joints. They will help develop an exercise program specially-tailored to your needs, putting together the right combination of activities to improve physical fitness and avoid injury.



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