

When should I Replace My Helmet

If your helmet is several seasons old but appears in good condition and you haven't damaged it in a crash or with rough treatment, it is still recommended that a frequently worn helmet be replaced every 3 years or so. The reason is that the foam degrades due to sun, heat, salty sweat and other environmental factors, added to the usual knocks of regular cycling activity. These things make the foam unable to provide full protection in the event of a head impact.

A helmet should certainly be replaced after it's smacked in a crash or even dented by a hard drop.

However, some experts (presumably those not working for helmet companies) maintain that a helmet will do the job no matter what its age as long as it's undamaged. In their view, there is no age limit.

There's no arguing, though, that buying a new helmet every 3 years will keep you current with comfort and safety features as well as style.

Helmet Fit

Helmets are not hats! They must be level on your head and strapped on securely to be protective in a crash. You want the helmet to be level on the head, with the fitting pads inside touching all the way around and the strap comfortably snug.

First, adjust the fit pads or ring

Most helmets come with extra foam fitting pads to customize the fit. You can usually remove the top pad or use a thin one there to lower the helmet on the head, bringing its protection down further on the sides. Use thicker pads on the side if your head is narrow and there is a space, or add thicker pads in the back for rounder heads. Move pads around to touch your head evenly all the way around. If you have a "one size fits all" model with a fitting ring instead, just adjust the fit by tightening the ring if needed.

Then, Adjust the Straps

Put the helmet on, level on your head. Adjust the rear (nape) straps, then the front straps, to locate the Y fitting where the straps come together just under your ear. You may have to slide the straps across the top of the helmet to get them even on both sides. Then adjust the chin strap so it is comfortably snug. Now adjust the rear stabilizer if the helmet has one.

Are you done?

Shake your head around violently. Then put your palm under the front edge and push up and back. Can you move the helmet more than an inch or so from level, exposing your bare forehead? Then you need to tighten the strap in front of your ear. Now reach back and pull up on the back edge. Can you move the helmet more than an inch? If so, tighten the nape strap. When you are done, your helmet should be level, feel solid on your head and be comfortable. It should not bump on your glasses (if it does, tighten the nape strap). If it still does not fit that way, keep working with the straps and pads, or try another helmet.

Checklist

- Level - The helmet should be level on the rider's head.
- Rim barely visible - The front rim should be barely visible to the rider's eye
- Y below the ear - The Y of the side straps should meet just below the ear
- Snug strap - The chin strap should be snug against the chin so that when the rider opens their mouth very wide the helmet pulls down a little bit.
- Skin moves a little - Move the helmet side to side and front to back, watching the skin around the rider's eyebrows. It should move slightly with the helmet. If it does not, the fit pads are probably too thin in front or back, or the helmet may even be too large.
- Stabilizer snug - If there is a rear stabilizer, adjust it until it is snug under the bulge on the rear of the head.
- Palm test - Put your palm on the front of your helmet and push it up and back. If it moves more than an inch more fitting is required.
- Shake test - Shake your head around. If the helmet dislodges, work on the strap adjustments.
- Comfort - The helmet should be comfortable.
- Be ready to switch - Not all helmets fit all heads. Be prepared to try a different brand/ model helmet if the one you are fitting just will not work.