

## gerontology

A. Jolayne  
Farrell

Dear Jo:

After riding a bicycle for over sixty years, I have now decided to buy a bicycle helmet. I ride my bike here in the north all summer and bring it south in the winter. Lately, I have had a couple of close calls — I fell once on a bike path and hurt my wrist and just today, a car came far too close for comfort. My questions for you are — is there any evidence that wearing a helmet reduces serious head injury? — and what should I look for when buying a helmet?

Mr. W. R.,  
Northern Michigan Senior

Dear Mr. R.:

Current statistics reveal that each year over 50,000 bicyclists suffer serious head injuries. Of these, 1,300 die. To a great extent, these injuries and deaths are preventable.

Wearing protective headgear — a bicycle helmet — according to recent research can reduce the risk of a serious head and brain injury by almost 90 percent.

Since most of us, like you Mr. R., have ridden bicycles for most of our lives — and without helmets — we

have a false sense of security regarding the risk of a head injury.

We fool ourselves into thinking that head injuries only happen to children and teenagers when in fact only half of them do. We also think we are safe from injury if we only ride on sidewalks or on bicycle paths. The truth is bicycle accidents can happen anywhere, even on one's own driveway.

When buying a bicycle helmet, the best guidelines are those recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics:

The helmet should meet the voluntary testing standards of one of these two groups: American National Standards Institute or Snell Memorial Foundation. Look for the sticker inside the helmet.

Buy the right size. When trying it on, it should fit comfortably and shouldn't pinch.

Select one with a sturdy outer shell and a polystyrene liner. Be sure it allows adequate ventilation.

Use the adjustable foam pads to ensure a proper fit at the front, sides, and back.

Adjust the chin strap for a snug fit. The helmet should cover the top of the forehead and not rock from side to side or back and forth with the chin strap in place.

Replace the helmet if it is involved in an accident.

Mr. R., as you probably already know, bicycle riding is an excellent aerobic exercise for those in your age group. It can benefit the car-

diovascular and musculoskeletal systems as well as decrease depression and improve one's emotional outlook.

One last word of advice. If you store your helmet on the handlebars of your bike, you'll wear it every time you cycle.

Readers can write to Jolayne Farrell at 11 Cynthia Crescent, Richmond Hill, Ontario L4E 2P8.

## County board OKs site 'walk-overs'

The Oakland County Commission voted to authorize up to \$50,000 to finance three additional walk-over inspections of sites being considered for a county-owned landfill.

The inspections — to be conducted by experts, environmentalists and local officials — are designed to determine if they are home to any endangered species or extensive wetlands.

Sites deemed to have extensive wetlands or nests of endangered wildlife will be excluded from consideration for the landfill — some-

thing for which residents in the respective communities are praying.

IN OTHER decisions, the commission:

• Approved a contract allowing Sheriff John P. Nichols to lease up to 32 beds in the Oakland County Jail to Wayne County to ease overcrowding in that lockup.

Oakland County will receive daily rent of \$55 per bed for the rest of 1989 and \$57.33 per bed per day in 1990, after which the contract expires.

• Approved a county millage of 4.6392 per \$1,000 of assessed value

for 1990 — the same rate paid since 1982.

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