



BCHD PRESS RELEASE

Baltimore City Health Department
1001 E. Fayette Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21202
Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, Mayor – Oxiris Barbot, M.D., Commissioner of Health

Media Contact: *Brian Schleiter*
443-984-2623
mediahealth@baltimorecity.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Health Department Encourages Bike Safety During National Bike Month

More than 700 deaths a year attributed to bike accidents nationally

BALTIMORE, MD (May 18, 2011) – Bike riding improves health and fitness, can reduce traffic and congestion, and is an inexpensive transportation mode for everyone. However, there are still significant health and safety risks associated with bicycle riding. Each year, more than 500,000 people in the U.S. are treated in emergency departments, and more than 700 people die as a result of bicycle-related injuries.

In recognition of National Bike Month, the Baltimore City Health Department will promote the safe use of bicycles throughout the month of May by participating in BikeBaltimore, the Department of Transportation's bike program. BikeBaltimore organizes a variety of events around Baltimore City to encourage safe bicycle riding. A list of all events can be found on this Website: <http://www.bmorebikemonth.com/events/>.

Children are at particularly high risk for bicycle-related injuries. In 2001, children 15 years and younger accounted for 59 percent of all bicycle-related injuries seen in U.S. emergency departments, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“Bicycle helmets are the single most effective safety device available to reduce head injury and death from a bicycle crash,” said Commissioner of Health Dr. Oxiris Barbot. “Helmets should be worn every time you ride a bike. In order to maximize protection, ensure the helmet fits properly. A helmet should sit on top of the head in a level position, and should not rock forward, backward or side to side.”

The Johns Hopkins Children's Safety Center, run by the Johns Hopkins Center for Injury Research and Policy, offers free bike helmet fittings and also supplies reduced-cost helmets. Visit their Website (www.HopkinsSafetyCenters.org) or call 410-614-5587 for more information.

Other bike safety tips include:

- Be visible – Wear bright colored clothes or helmets during the day; wear reflective gear when biking at night.

- Stay hydrated – Drink plenty of water when cycling, especially in the heat. Dress appropriately for the weather and be prepared for storms and other changes in the weather.
- Maintain your bicycle – Regularly inspect your bicycle every time before you hit the road or trail, not just at annual tune-ups. Be sure the brakes are working properly and replace worn pads. Clean and grease the chain often.
- Prepare for emergencies – For long distance rides, pack any wrenches, spare parts and flat repair items you may need.
- Plan your route – Whenever possible, pick a route with less car traffic. Obey the rules of the road (always drive on the right side of the road with traffic) and be conscious of vehicles behind you by installing a rear-facing mirror on your bike.

Additional information on safety tips for bike riders can be found on the Baltimore Metropolitan Council Website: <http://www.baltometro.org/commuter-options/outfit-yourself-for-safety>.

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