

Guard Power: Members of National Guard Cycling gather for a group ride. The club promotes fitness, community and Soldier support. National Guard Cycling is open to Soldiers, Airmen, their friends and Families. For more info, go to www.nationalguardcycling.com



get out and ride

Bicycling for Beginners

By CHRISTIAN ANDERSON

In the past decade, bicycling has become a popular sport in the U.S., thanks in part to Lance Armstrong and his seven Tour de France victories.

Recognizing the health benefits that accompany cycling, many Americans have pulled their old bikes from the garage and hit the streets. Not only can you burn hundreds of calories during a 30-minute to one-hour ride (see “Feel the Burn” chart), but biking causes less stress on knees, ankles, hips and lower back than running.

Safety First

Although bicycling is fun and exhilarating, it can be dangerous. Always buckle up—by buckling your helmet strap. Just like a seatbelt in a car, a helmet is a bicyclist’s best friend.

Depending on the laws in their area, some people skip the helmet, but this can be a fatal decision. If you fall and your head hits the pavement, your helmet can protect you from head injury.

Crash Protection

Helmet.org, an informational and promotional site to spread awareness of bicycle-related crashes, strongly recommends the use of helmets while cycling.

Check out these stats:

Non-helmeted riders are **14 times more likely** to be involved in a fatal crash than helmeted riders.

Head injuries account for more than **60 percent of bicycle-related deaths**, more than two-thirds of bicycle-related hospital admissions and about one-third of bicycle-related hospital emergency room visits.

Hitting the Road in Style—and Comfort

Getting into bicycling is simple. All you need is a bike, a helmet and a road. But you’ll find it’s more enjoyable if you plan ahead.

Stop by your local shop to get fit for your bicycle. A fit is an adjustment of your saddle (or seat) height, stem and handlebar height to match your body type and other specifications.

Most people are amazed at how much more comfortable their bicycle is with just a few millimeters of adjustment. Getting a proper fit, which can cost as little as \$30 at a bike shop, not only allows you to ride more comfortably for longer distances, but can help prevent injuries.

Quality Counts

Any bike will do, but sometimes it pays to upgrade and purchase a bicycle from a reputable dealer. A bicycle with a price tag of \$300 or more might sound high to some people, but these bikes usually have quality components and a warranty. You can buy less expensive bicycles, but they generally have cheaper components that won’t last as long.

Group Rides

Whether you’re a beginner wanting to learn the ins and outs of riding, or a seasoned pro wanting to brush up on your skills, go to your local bike shop and ask about group rides. The shop can help you find one that suits your needs and skill level. From short, easy rides to your local coffee shop, to treks across the next county and back, there’s usually an option for everyone.

The biggest benefit of a group ride is camaraderie, as you will meet people with the same passion as

Feel the Burn

According to Bicycling.com, bike riding is an efficient way to burn calories. Here are some stats to tell you how many calories you can burn by riding a bike.

Average male:

- 10 mph pleasure riding (30 minutes) 163 calories
- 10 mph pleasure riding (60 minutes) 327 calories
- 14 mph moderate effort (30 minutes) 327 calories
- 14 mph moderate effort (60 minutes) 654 calories
- 20 mph racing effort (30 minutes) 654 calories
- 20 mph racing effort (60 minutes) 1,309 calories

Average female:

- 10 mph pleasure riding (30 minutes) 145 calories
- 10 mph pleasure riding (60 minutes) 290 calories
- 14 mph moderate effort (30 minutes) 290 calories
- 14 mph moderate effort (60 minutes) 581 calories
- 20 mph racing effort (30 minutes) 581 calories
- 20 mph racing effort (60 minutes) 1,163 calories

yours. Plus, the old adage “there’s safety in numbers” comes into play when you ride with a group.

So pump up the tires, strap on your helmet and hit the streets to stay fit, have fun and enjoy life! 