

EM4849E

Equestrian Safety

A Guide to Promotion of Helmet Use
for Riding Clubs and Communities

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION



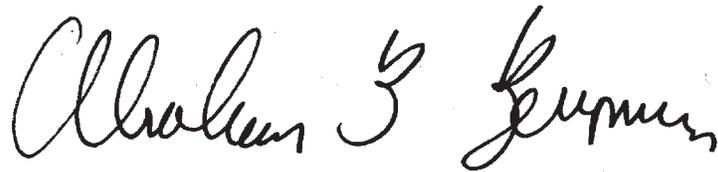
WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

4-H Youth Development Program 

Dear Reader,

As a physician working in a major trauma center, all too many of my patients have illnesses or conditions which, with our present state of knowledge, I do not know how to prevent, and worse, whose course I cannot alter. However, it is especially frustrating to come across patients with serious illnesses or injuries that could have been prevented. Such is the case with patients who incur equestrian-related head injuries. Most of these injuries can be prevented through the simple means of wearing a protective helmet. Yet, too few riders avail themselves of this potentially life-saving opportunity.

This booklet is written as a guide for those interested in safe riding, and on how barriers to equestrian helmet use might be overcome. I hope that it is helpful.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Abraham S. Bergman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Abraham Bergman, MD
Head, Prevention
Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center
Harborview Medical Center
Seattle, WA

This bulletin was originally developed by the Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center. It was revised and updated by the Children's Safety Network Rural Injury Prevention Resource Center.

How to Use This Guide

This guide was developed as a tool for local clubs and other organizations interested in promoting helmet use among equestrians. It provides users with materials that can be used in a variety of community education efforts.

The samples on the following pages can be reprinted for educational purposes without permission. However, we ask that you follow these guidelines in copying and distribution:

- 1) The materials should be distributed at no charge.
- 2) The materials should not be altered in any way, either through editing, adding, or deleting information. You may, however, add information on the document that identifies a club or organization as a sponsor and/or source for further information.

Three key suggestions:

- 1) Organize a helmet committee or task force in your club, organization or community. Develop specific goals and objectives that can be used to guide your efforts.
- 2) Decide on a method to evaluate your efforts. Evaluation isn't as difficult as you might think, especially if you decide on a plan **before** your program begins.
- 3) Use the assets that exist in your community (see following page for suggestions) to assist you in reaching your goals.

Use Your Community Assets

I. Interest Groups

Health Departments

Health departments are interested in preventing injuries as well as disease. Many departments have program planning specialists that can assist you with your community campaign.

Pediatricians, Pediatric Nurses, Physical Therapists, Family Physicians, and Sports Clinics

Contact your local clinic to encourage involvement through distribution of educational materials to patients. Consider making a local health professional, who has an interest in riding and injury prevention, one of the spokespersons for your efforts.

Clubs

Pony Club, 4-H, local riding groups (all disciplines), Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, and camps. Encourage the local and regional leaders to establish a minimum safety standard for all participants. Emphasize the role-model issues and educate parents, too.

Insurance Companies

Encourage representatives to distribute educational materials with insurance policies. Also, suggest possible reduction in premiums upon proven enforcement of a mandatory helmet ruling.

Professional Service Organizations

Service organizations such as Kiwanis or Rotary Clubs may be motivated to promote safety issues among their members and communities, and may have other resources to use for printing, funding, and volunteer efforts.

University Health Professions Programs

Students who may be interested in preventive medicine or graduate studies may be enticed to participate by educating their peers and other health care professionals.

Trauma Centers

Head injury or other injury prevention programs may offer information and statistics for your state's injury cases, which can then be passed along in your educational materials. Local or regional statistics make a greater impact because they localize the problem. Also, helmet awareness is heightened when local victim stories are shared with the public through press releases.

II. Printing of Educational Materials

Many companies or agencies have their own printing shops. They may make an in-kind contribution to your safety program.

Check with these groups in your locale. As a public service, one or more of them may contribute free printing of materials to be used in their community.

Banks
Businesses
Colleges

Public health departments
Government agencies
Health facilities

III. Media

Learn to use the media to your advantage. Through the local or regional section of your newspaper, notify the public of upcoming safety demonstrations or helmet promotion programs sponsored by your organization.

Newspapers

Great way to promote prevention programs. Write a letter to the editor. Work with a reporter to do a human interest story on a rider who was injured (or who avoided injury).

Newsletters

Many interest groups send monthly newsletters to all members. Contribute articles to start a discussion on helmet safety and standards.

Magazines

Horse-related publications take interest in programs such as this. Encourage readers to write to the editor or submit articles of relevance.

IV. Other

Specialty Groups

Groups such as your state head injury foundation, trauma centers, and safety groups should be included in any state-wide programs. Don't forget to include your local public school system. Parent-teacher organizations will often participate in campaigns that promote safety among children. These groups sometimes produce newsletters that are sent to medical professionals and the public.

State-wide Organizations

Encourage well recognized state-wide groups to require helmet use by youth. Many small groups may look to these "trend-setters" for leadership and guidance.

Activities

- Put up posters and flyers at local feed stores, barns, riding schools, tack stores, etc.
- Create a poster contest and display winning designs at horse events or sponsoring businesses.
- Reward children who wear a helmet to support a positive attitude among their peers.
- Encourage a speaker's bureau on the importance of wearing an ASTM/SEI helmet. Include both adults and children when speaking with smaller clubs.
- Contact a local tack store or helmet manufacturer to help design your own helmet coupon or bulk buy program.

A Community Equestrian Helmet Campaign for Children

An effective children's equestrian helmet campaign is multifaceted and is limited only by the efforts of equestrian organizations, riding establishments and clubs, and respected community groups. A local community coalition with a concern for children and the prevention of trauma can play a key role in getting young riders to wear protective head gear. The life-saving potential of such a campaign is significant, and the sense of satisfaction will be equally great.

WHY EQUESTRIAN HELMETS?

- Falls from horses are a major cause of rider head injuries.
- The most common cause of death in riders is head injury.
- Helmets have been shown to be very effective at preventing head injuries.
- Survivors of serious head injuries are very likely to have permanent physical and/or behavioral disabilities.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

- Only a small percentage of riders wear equestrian helmets.
- Most parents don't realize the danger to their children.
- Helmets meeting ASTM/SEI standards can be difficult to obtain.
- Few children think that helmet use is "cool."

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

- Parents need to become aware of the problem.
- Helmets need to be made available locally at a reasonable price.
- Improved helmets are being manufactured; riders need to be made aware of recent style changes.
- Children need to begin to see helmets as acceptable, even "cool."

HOW DOES A TYPICAL COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN WORK?

- Use the local media, club newsletters, equestrian magazines, and displays at equestrian events to inform riders of the need to wear protective head gear.
- Distribute pamphlets and posters about equestrian helmets for kids.
- Hold educational events for children and parents.
- Make low-cost helmets available through non-profit organizations, discount coupons or encourage tack shops to provide discounts.
- Consider establishing a helmet use regulation in your club or community.

WHAT CAN LOCAL GROUPS DO?

- Stimulate involvement by members and other community groups and professionals.
- Support campaign costs with in-kind contributions, volunteer time or donations.

EQUESTRIAN HELMETS

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?



A RIDING HELMET SHOULD:

- Be SEI certified and meet the ASTM F1163-90 standard. This will be noted by a label permanently attached to the inside shell. Not all helmets meet these standards.
- Be worn at all times when you are mounted.
- Fit as snugly as you can comfortably wear it. The chin strap **must** touch the rider's jaw and/or chin.

CHOOSE A RIDING HELMET THAT:

- Is appropriate to your riding style.
- Stays on your head when the chin strap is fastened, without moving around.

While the helmet is secured, try moving the helmet front to back, and side to side; the scalp should move with the helmet, indicating a correct fit.

FOR SAFETY:

- Always ride with your helmet securely fastened.
- Regularly check the laces in your hat harness, if applicable.
- Immediately replace any helmet that has a damaged harness or has been involved in a serious impact. Damage to the shock absorbing inner layer may decrease the effectiveness of the helmet. This may not always be detected with the naked eye.

Equestrian Safety ... The Facts

Most severe head injuries among equestrians can be prevented. Like football, baseball, hockey and bicycling, horseback riding is an activity for which helmets are essential for safety. In contrast to these other sports, only a small percentage of horseback riders wear protective headgear every time they ride.

Injuries:

An estimated 34,636 emergency room visits were made by children and young adults up to 24 years of age in 1992 for horse-related injuries. This figure does not include those injuries treated at other facilities such as physician offices and medical centers.

Head injuries:

More than 17% of all horse-related injuries are head injuries. Furthermore, head injuries are associated with more than 60% of equestrian-related deaths.

Riding helmets are not child's play:

Injuries occur at all ages and all levels of riding experience. In 1991–92, NEISS injury estimates showed this age distribution:

Under 14 years	24%
15–24 years	23%
25–44 years	40%
Over 45 years	13%

Where and how do you get hurt?

Injuries occur most frequently around or near the home or farm. Most serious injuries to equestrians are caused by being separated from the horse while riding or by falling with the horse.

Wear a helmet that is:

- SEI certified and meets the ASTM F1163-90 standard. Beware, there are many helmets on the market that appear to be safe, but do not meet these safety standards.
- Appropriate for your riding style. There are several new helmet designs available which offer a removable washable inner liner, are lightweight, well-ventilated and can be used with interchangeable covers—western hat, traditional velvet, colored lycra, or nylon.

Data from NEISS (the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System), 1991–1992.

Developed by Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center, Seattle, WA. Revised by CSN RIPRC, 4/95

Can **YOU** Reduce the Riding Risk?

The simple answer is yes. As in any other sport, you can reduce the risk of injury by following some basic procedures. Most injuries occur during leisure riding: hacking, schooling, trail riding, "fooling around." Injuries on the ground account for 16% of horse-related injuries. You should:

- **Wear protective head gear.**
As in baseball, football, bicycling and hockey, a helmet should be worn whenever you ride. The most severe form of injury is a head injury; and while a broken arm or leg can heal, a broken brain doesn't.
- **Wear an approved helmet.**
Make sure your helmet is SEI certified as meeting the ASTM F1163-90 standard. Shop wisely; not all helmets available pass this safety standard.
- **Wear Correct Footwear.**
All riders using stirrups should wear boots or shoes that have a heel and completely cover the rider's ankle.
- **Never lock the safety stirrup bar upright.**
The safety stirrup bar should always be in the horizontal position. This should allow the stirrup leather to detach from the saddle if you are being dragged.
- **Use safety stirrup irons.**
These prevent a rider from being dragged if their foot has slipped through the stirrup.
- **Check equipment before riding.**
Inspect the girth strap, stirrup leathers, reins and stitching for wear, and see that each are securely fastened.
- **Never tie yourself to a horse.**
Never wrap a lead rope or reins around your hand or waist. Never strap yourself or someone else to the saddle.

**Every
time**

**Do I Need
to Wear an
Equestrian
Helmet ???**

Developed by:
Harborview Injury Prevention
and Research Center
Seattle, WA 1992

**Every
ride...**



Data from NEISS (the National Electronic
Injury Surveillance System), 1991-1992.

Revised: 3/95

The Myths

"I'm an experienced rider, I don't need to wear a helmet" ...

There is no evidence to support the statement that experienced riders have fewer head injuries than inexperienced riders.

"Riding helmets are just for kids" ...

A helmet should be worn regardless of age, skill, or experience. Adults, ages 25 or older, account for at least 53% of hospital treated rider injuries. Also adults serve as important role models for children.

"I'm not likely to fall on my head" ...

Head injuries account for more than 60% of equestrian-related deaths.

"I have a very quiet horse so I don't need to wear a helmet" ...

There is no such thing as a "bomb proof" or safe horse. Some are better trained than others, however, horses are unpredictable and can take fright at any unusual object or sound.

"I don't ride competitively, I just ride for leisure. I don't need a helmet."

A common statement from most unprotected riders, 60% of the reported injuries occurred at home or on a farm. Regardless of your riding activities, on the trail or in competition, always wear a helmet when sitting on a horse.



Ride Safely

Most severe head injuries can be prevented. Like football, baseball, hockey and bicycling, horseback riding is an activity for which helmets are essential for safety.

Always wear a helmet when mounted on a horse. It can save your life!!! While a broken leg or arm will mend, a 'broken brain' can't.

A safe helmet meets the ASTM F1163 standard and is SEI approved. Look for this mandatory label on the inside of the helmet.

A helmet must be secure: Always fasten the harness before mounting the horse and leave it fastened until dismounted.

Choose a helmet for your riding style. There are new light weight, ventilated equestrian helmets available in assorted styles and colors.

HEAD INJURIES ARE FOR LIFE

WEAR A HELMET !!!

For Parents

Stress that having their child wear an equestrian helmet is the most effective way in which parents can make horse riding safer.

- A helmet protects the head in a fall.
- Falls occur regardless of age or experience.
- A quiet horse does not mean a safe horse. Any animal can take fright at a sudden noise, nasty dog or unusual situation.

Advise parents on how to select the correct helmet:

- A helmet must have the ASTM/SEI safety label permanently attached to the inside.
- Caution parents that not all helmets meet these safety standards.
- Inform parents that equestrian helmets now offer several new features. They are well ventilated, light weight, offer a superior fit with pads similar to a bicycle helmet, and come in a variety of styles (Western, English, schooling) and have removable visors.

Encourage parents to act as role models.

- Advise parents about the need to protect their head (40% of riding injuries occur in the 25-44 year age group) and inform them that almost all children wear a helmet if they ride with adults who have one on.

For Children

Encourage helmet use as soon as a child begins to ride a horse.

Speak with children about the importance of wearing a helmet.

- Ask if they wore a helmet the last time they rode.
- Ask if they know why they need to protect their head. Explain that a head injury is for life.
- Point out that helmets are used for other sports like baseball, football, hockey, cycling and car racing. Even astronauts wear helmets.

Reward children who wear a helmet. Either with small prizes such as stickers, or verbal encouragement.

Activities

Put up posters and flyers in your waiting room and give brochures and discount coupons to parents.

Initiate or lend support to local campaigns.

- Work to get an article in your local newspaper and agree to be interviewed.
- Give a presentation about the importance of wearing protective head gear at local clubs (4-H, Pony Club, horse camps).

Educate your colleagues about equestrian helmets and recent design improvements.



Injury Facts

Injury Rates: 145,315 equestrians were treated at hospital emergency rooms in 1991–1992.

Head injuries: More than 17% of all horse related injuries are head injuries. Furthermore, head injuries are associated with more than 60% of equestrian related deaths.

Injuries occur: Most frequently around or near the home/farm (60%). In recent years there has been a decrease in the number of severe riding injuries at equestrian events and schools. This is due in part to an increase in the use of protective head gear at such events.

Home/farm	60%
Events/sports	30%
Street/public place	9.5%
Training schools	.5%

Data from the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System, 1991–1992.

*Physicians:
Counsel Patients*

Equestrian Helmets Save Heads

Developed by:
Harborview Injury Prevention
and Research Center
Seattle, WA 1992



Revised: 3/95

Equestrian Helmet Availability

To obtain an equestrian helmet:

- Be certain to specify that you are interested in an SEI certified, ASTM standard helmet. Models are available in western and english styles.
- Contact your local tack shop or mail order equestrian supply retailer.
- For further information on models, availability, and group discounts, contact an importer, distributor, or manufacturer listed below.

For further information...

International Riding Helmets, Ltd.
205 Industrial Loop
Staten Island, NY 10309

Offers a special discount program for 4-H clubs, Pony Clubs, and riding clubs for the handicapped. Call Robert Stark toll-free at 800-435-6380 for complete details.

Lexington Safety Products, Inc.
480 Fairman Road
Lexington, KY 40511

Has arrangements with selected associations (noted below) or call 800-928-4287 to obtain information on Lexington helmets and the distributor nearest you.

- CHA-The Association for Horsemanship Safety & Education, phone: 800-399-0138
- North American Riding for the Handicapped Association, phone 800-369-7433
- National 4-H Council Supply Service
7100 Connecticut Avenue
Chevy Chase, MD 20815-4999
Phone: 301-961-2934

Safetech Injury Prevention Technologies

Safetech offers a discount/rebate program on the Troxel E.Q. Helmet for clubs. Call 800-270-2526.

Australian Holdings, Inc.

Australian Holdings, Inc. is the U.S. importer for helmets manufactured by Equine Science Marketing Pty, Ltd. This importer does not sell direct but will provide interested parties with a list of U.S. distributors. (310-348-1993).

Helmet Cover Manufacturers

Helmet covers are used for decorative and protective purposes. Covers are available in an array of colors, patterns, and styles. There are also "rain covers" available to protect the helmets from rain and soil damage. Check with your local tack store, mail order supplier, or manufacturers listed below.

Helmet Helpers,™ LTD., 39 Depot Street, Merrimac, NH 03054 (603) 424-4001, (800) 229-5247

International Riding Helmets, Ltd., 205 Industrial Loop, Staten Island, NY 10309 (800) 435-6380

Sipp Silks, 216 Hedgeman Rd., Moorsetown, NJ 08057 (609) 234-6224



WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
 EXTENSION

Issued by Washington State University Extension and the U.S. Department of Agriculture in furtherance of the Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Extension programs and policies are consistent with federal and state laws and regulations on nondiscrimination regarding race, sex, religion, age, color, creed, and national or ethnic origin; physical, mental, or sensory disability; marital status or sexual orientation; and status as a Vietnam-era or disabled veteran. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local WSU Extension office. Trade names have been used to simplify information; no endorsement is intended. Revised April 1995. Subject code 814.

EM4849E