Bicycle helmet laws started in the late 1980s. The laws helped lower the injuries and deaths of children from bicycle accidents. One study found that 300,000 kids go to the emergency room every year because of bicycle accidents. At least 10,000 kids every year have injuries that are bad enough that they must stay a few days in the hospital.

Many kids who have an accident while riding their bikes hit their heads on the ground. This is called a head injury. Head injuries can be very dangerous. Head injuries can cause damage to your brain. Some brain injuries cannot be fixed. Other brain injuries can be fatal. That means a person dies because of the injury. Wearing a helmet helps to protect your head and brain.

Some people don’t think wearing helmets is important. They say that wearing a helmet won’t prevent someone from getting hurt. They say when kids wear helmets, they take more risks. They aren’t as careful when they ride their bikes. It is true that you can still get hurt even if you are wearing a helmet. But when you wear a helmet, you help protect your face, head, and brain in case you fall.

Many kids complain that bike helmets are uncomfortable to wear. Helmets can be uncomfortable if they don’t fit correctly. Helmets should not be too small or too big. For a helmet to work, it must be worn the right way. The straps should always be fastened. If the straps are loose, the helmet will fall off your head when you fall. The helmet can’t protect your brain if it falls off!
States pass helmet laws because they want fewer people to get hurt or killed in bicycle accidents. The laws usually require children to wear helmets. Florida found there were fewer head injuries after the law went into effect. Seattle, Washington had an 85% decrease in head injuries when kids wore helmets. One study said helmet laws can save 20 lives per year!

Not all people think wearing a helmet is a good thing. They say the laws take away the freedom to choose. They say a helmet only protects the brain in some kinds of accidents. Some studies show helmets make riders feel too comfortable. These studies found that kids take more risks, because the helmets made them feel like they couldn’t get hurt.

When kids take more risks, they are more likely to have accidents. Helmets do not prevent accidents. Helmets won’t protect your face, arms, legs, or other body parts from getting hurt. Bike riders who wear helmets still need to be careful. Riders need to be aware of their surroundings. They need to follow the rules of the road. And they need to wear the right kinds of clothes and shoes.

Brain Injury Basics

The bones of your skull protect your brain. So do special fluids inside the skull. But if someone hits their head hard enough, the brain can jerk forward. This causes the brain to hit hard against the skull. This can cause brain injury. The brain can get bruised or start to bleed.

Helmets are designed to help protect the head and brain. They have a layer of foam inside. In an accident, the helmet helps cushion the brain from the force of the hit. This means the head doesn’t hit the ground as hard as it would without a helmet. Because of this, there is less chance that the brain will jerk forward against the skull.