

Triad NEWSLETTER

SAFETY, CRIME PREVENTION, AND
HEALTHY LIVING FOR OLDER ADULTS

- Summer 2024 -



Back in the Saddle Again

By Jeanna M. Olson, Triad Volunteer

Do you remember the sheer joy of riding a bike? As a kid it meant freedom, hanging out with other bicycle kids and getting home faster when your dad whistled. The COVID-19 pandemic saw Americans spending \$7 billion on bikes and accessories in 2020 and nearly \$8 billion in 2021. The cycling market started to taper off in the 3rd quarter of 2021 and the number of seniors wanting to get back in the saddle again seemed to drop along with it.

“We saw huge numbers of older adults coming in for bikes during the pandemic,” says DreamBikes Chief Executive Matt Martinez. “There also has been a drastic drop in the past couple years. Hopefully we can get that to change.”

One way to promote cycling in older adults is to promote safety basics. And a good place to start is with something we didn't do as kids—wear a helmet. Even if your only helmet reference came from football or the

Great Gazoo, it doesn't change the fact that elderly and teen cyclists account for the highest number of head injuries and fatalities among cyclists.



Standard helmet types are recreational, road, and mountain and can be used for more than one type of cycling, although different helmets offer different features tailored to specific types of riding. Do you need your helmet to be extra lightweight and aerodynamic? Are you looking for a MIPS (Multi-directional Impact Protection System) or WaveCel helmet <https://wavecel.com/technology/>, and how much can you afford?

After a lot of research and in-person shopping, I found something I could afford and comfortably wear at the Safety Center in the American Family Children's Hospital. <https://www.uwhealth.org/safety-center>. My first Safety Center helmet cost \$10 and I picked up a MIPS helmet for \$40 last April. It's by

appointment only so they can help you select the best size and make sure you're wearing it correctly. It was a good choice for me because the Safety Center helmets fit me comfortably, and I could afford them. But remember, there are many choices out there and it's up to you to find the one which serves you best.

While many potential cyclists are put off by the fear of injury, wearing a helmet and finding the right bike are important first steps to safe riding. Evidence suggests that riding a bike increases balance and coordination even when using a stationary bike. Stationary cycling is considered a healthy form of endurance exercise and is less physically stressful than running sports.

It doesn't require as much postural control as a treadmill and is a better choice for people with poor balance. Stationary bikes, especially stationary recumbent bikes, are a good place to start or stay, can be a safe part of postoperative rehab and are a nice option when the weather isn't conducive to biking outdoors.

"For those who are pretty able-bodied, there is not much required aside from the safety equipment, though, it's not a bad

idea for those who are still riding bikes built prior to the 2000's to look into newer bikes," says Lane Lessman manager of Budget Bicycle Center in Madison. "The reasons abound, but essentially the bikes have become lighter (meaning less effort required for pedaling) and often offer very upright riding positions for those who need it. In short, make sure you have the right bike for what kind of riding you will be doing."

Bicycles, like helmets, are something you need to try in person and knowing where you'll be riding is essential. For example, I'm a recreational cyclist, and mostly ride on uncrowded trails made of asphalt and crushed limestone or at a nearby park. My old bike started to feel heavy and harder to control at the start of the

pandemic when I also noticed issues with mounting and dismounting. I began to look for something easier to handle with a smaller frame after a friendly golden retriever named Kimber knocked me off my bike and into the mud.

I did my research, talked to shop mechanics and associates and test rode many new and used bicycles that instantly felt better than the one I'd been riding. One of the mechanics showed me how to tilt the bike

Senior Friendly Bicycles



Cruiser
Comfy & Casual



Hybrid
Road & Mountain



Step-Thru
Low/No Top Tube



Stationary
Recumbent or Upright



Tricycle
Known For Balance Recumbent or Upright

towards me for an easier on and off which came in handy after a total knee replacement a year later. I ended up with a lighter weight hybrid with disc brakes and vibration-reducing handlebars which also keeps me in an upright position you can look into riser bars. You can get more information about handlebars here <https://bikebefore.com/best-bicycle-handlebars-for-sitting-up-right-explained/>.

Making sure I have the basics such as front and back lights, reflectors, and a helmet makes me feel and ride safer. I no longer ride at night or in hot weather, and I use white or dayglow colored water bottles and cages for extra visibility. I also got an orange bell for times I don't want to say, "To

your left."

There's so much that cycling can do for you, it enhances skeletal muscle power and endurance, helps with fat mass, high blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, and posture. Riding a bike puts very little stress on your joints which makes it a good low impact exercise for those with osteoarthritis. Making sure it's the right activity for you can add more fun and exercise to your summer, fall and spring. And like physical exercise in general, riding a bike can extend active independent living.

I have created a couple of tip sheets. Check them out below.

Safety Measures



Accessories to make you more visible

Appropriate Footwear

Yearly Physicals

Vision Checks

Helmets



Biking Basics

Helmet, **Lights, Reflectors**

Ride On Trails, Paths, **Low Traffic Areas**

Avoid Rain, Wind, Night Rides, Rough Pavement

Bring Your Water, Phone, Wallet

Know Your Surroundings

Have Properly Inflated Tires



Trail Tips

- ◀ Bike during the day & early morning when hot
- ◀ Avoid crowded times such as weekends
- ◀ Avoid rain, wind and excessive heat
- ◀ Know your terrain
- ◀ If you don't think you can make it up a hill, get off & walk
- ◀ Know how to stop & start—be prepared to stop suddenly
- ◀ Store distractions such as phone, camera & headphones while riding
- ◀ Make sure your helmet fits securely
- ◀ Make sure your front & back lights are charged and securely fastened
- ◀ Make sure there's enough air in your tires



Safety Considerations in an E-Bike World

By Neil D. McCallum, Triad Board Member

Madison and Dane County are wonderful areas to bicycle. The area has long been recognized as one of the best areas in the country for biking. With that popularity comes the rise in the use of E-bikes. And thanks to [BCycle](#) anyone in Madison can ride an E-bike. But what does this mean to those sharing the road with an E-bike?

E-bikes can go up to about 30 miles per hour. This is almost 3 times the speed of an average bicycle rider. As we drive in our car or truck, we must be aware that the bike you see ... may be going much faster than you would anticipate! This is especially important at intersections. E-bikes, bikes, and motorcycles have the same legal right to be on the road as a car or truck. They are much harder to see, though, so drivers always want to minimize your vehicle's blind spots.

Many of our roads in Madison have bike lanes. When you approach an intersection in a vehicle and you want to make a right-hand turn, always check to make sure that there is not a cyclist in the bike lane. The cyclist may be continuing straight on the road and has the "right of way". Remember, too, that the cyclist might be going faster than you anticipate.

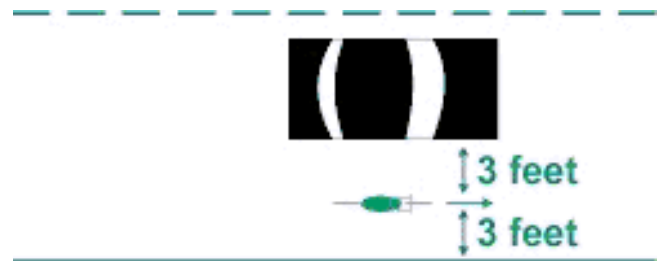
Another consideration is the weight of the bike and the support of that weight when the bike is stopped at an intersection. An average hybrid bike weighs about 25 to 30 pounds. An E-bike is much heavier at between 44 to 55 pounds. This is significant when coming to a full stop. The E-bike rider, if not aware of this, could be subject to falling into the lane of traffic.

Per the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, "any electric bicycle capable of more than 30 miles per hour is, under

state law, a motorcycle and not a bicycle, and may not be ridden on any state trails that do not specifically allow motorcycles". Electric bicycles used without the motor engaged are allowed on all bicycle trails including the Badger State, Military Ridge and Glacial Drumlin trails.

Give cyclists room on the road – Per the Wisconsin Department of Transportation: Cyclists should:

- Ride just to the right of the actual traffic line, not alongside the curb.



- Keep at least three feet between yourself and the curb or from parked vehicles. Motorists should be passing you with at least 3 feet of clearance.

Another factor in E-bike safety is helmet use. As pointed out in a February 21, 2024, National Public Radio article <https://bit.ly/3X24kml>, many that ride E-bikes are not wearing helmets. "This near doubling of speeds coupled with pretty dismal rates of helmet use translates into an exponentially increased risk of head injuries," said Charles DiMaggio, a surgery professor and director of injury research at New York University School of Medicine. Urban design changes, helmet laws and enforcement, avoiding alcohol use while riding, and education, including E-bike

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Mum's the Word

By Rick Larson, Triad Volunteer

I have some exciting news I want to share with you, but first I want your word that you won't tell anyone else. This is just between me and you. OK? Nobody else. Mums the word.

Here's the news. I belong to a swell social group where I learn lots of stuff, go on bus trips, attend special events and coffees, and meet the most interesting people. This outfit makes me very happy. It makes a lot of people happy. It could make you happy.

It's called PLATO. That stands for **P**articipatory **L**earning **A**nd **T**eaching **O**rganization. But to me it means: Participate. Lively. Active. Together. Opportunity.

PLATO members are curious seniors who like to stay active in mind and body. Courses are offered via Zoom or in person or both, and led by retired, knowledgeable members. Classes about history, movies, music, literature, and more are available each fall, winter,

spring and summer.

Maybe you want to write about your life or learn more about the Civil War or what's happening in our nation, it's all there for you and more.

PLATO also organizes bus trips to plays, musical events and special places for members to enjoy. There are also regular coffee gatherings and lectures for those who want to meet locally with fellow members.

Best of all, the price for PLATO is perfect. Members get all this for a small \$60 annual fee. Sixty bucks. Affordable. Cheap. A bargain.

Want to find out more? Go to platomadison.org or email Baxter Richardson at baxter.2614@charter.net.

One more thing. I changed my mind about not telling anyone else. You should tell everyone you know.



Where love of learning never gets old

(Continued from page 5, Safety Considerations in an E-Bike World)

riding lessons, could help prevent injuries, said DiMaggio, who was not involved with the study, in an email.

"You have high speeds and a heavy E-bike

that kids can't control," Goodman said. "We need education, training, enforcement, development of good E-bike training for kids and engagement with parents so they are aware of the risks and how to keep kids safe."

Lithium-Ion Battery Safety

A program summary by Jane Bannerman, Triad Volunteer

This program was presented by Cameron Gasaway, a firefighter with the Madison Fire Department. He is a member of the Hazardous Incident Team which serves Dane County and other nearby counties. To watch the entire program, go to our YouTube channel <https://youtube.com/@triadsofdanecounty>.

Lithium-ion batteries are causing more fires around the country as their use increases. New York City has had many battery fire incidents, and they have shared their best practices with agencies around the country. Here are some important lithium-ion battery best practices.

Battery Basics

Lithium-ion batteries have become a favorite battery because of their compact size and power density. Many consumer devices are now powered with lithium batteries, such as electric bikes, cell phones, power tools, and hearing aids. We used to have more devices plugged in for power, but now we have many cordless devices that use rechargeable lithium-ion batteries. Almost any rechargeable battery can be a lithium-ion battery.

Safe Charging

It is very important to charge a lithium-ion battery only until full and then remove it from the charger. Lithium-ion batteries can overcharge and become exceedingly hot. Do not leave the battery on the charger once it is fully charged. If there is a defect in the charger or the battery, the battery could overcharge or overheat and catch on fire.

Only use the charger that came with the device, and if you need to replace a charger

or battery, use a charger or battery that the manufacturer has approved. There could be a controller in the charger or the battery that prevents overcharging, and a battery or charger that is not made for that device could put the device at risk for overcharging, overheating and starting on fire.

Charge your devices away from exits or egress paths. If a device overheats and starts smoking or starts on fire, you do not want the device to block your exit.

Where to buy battery-operated devices that are well made.

It's important to buy lithium-ion devices from reputable dealers. Big box stores, such as Target, Walmart and Best Buy, are good places to get well-made items. Be cautious when searching the internet for items that are super cheap. They may not be made of safe materials. You get what you pay for. Look for the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) Certification Marks.

Where to buy replacement batteries for your devices.

It is important to buy the replacement batteries from the manufacturer of the device to be sure that the replacement is compatible with your device.

What to do if you need to discard a lithium-ion battery or device.

Do not throw lithium-ion batteries into curbside trash or recycling bins. Equipment in recycling trucks or facilities can damage the battery and start a fire.

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Your Home: Sanctuary or Fall Hazard?

By Ashley Hillman, Safe Communities' Falls Prevention Program Manager

That favorite armchair, the window above the sink looking over the garden, and your mother's homemade quilt over the bed are all integral to making your home, your sanctuary. Your home is your space; it's your comfort zone. And it should be! However, if we think about reasons why people fall, one of the top reasons is because of our home environment.

Lighting:

We all need light to see, right? As we age, our vision changes and it often becomes more difficult to see objects that may be blocking our path in darkness or in a dimly lit room. This means if we forgot to put those shoes in the closet, we may not see them on our way to the bathroom during the night. Nightlights can make a huge difference in ensuring we are confident to see where we need to go. There are even nightlights with motion sensors or that automatically turn on when it's dark. Ensuring that we have a clearly lit path to the bathroom (or anywhere else!) at night is important. And what happens if a lightbulb goes out? Balancing on top of a chair to change it yourself is not the correct answer. Wait for a friend or family member to help. Or use a sturdy footstool with a support bar around it, but only if the lightbulb is low enough to reach this way. Also – it's helpful to have a light switch, or a lamp that's easy to reach, right next to the bed. This can help prevent stumbling around in the dark, looking for the light switch all the way over by the bedroom door.

Clutter:

With all of our electronic technology these days, we are increasing our electrical outlets like never before which means there are

often cords running from here and there and everywhere! It's helpful to make sure those cords are pushed up against the wall and taped down. We're all guilty of leaving shoes by the door, books, newspapers, or magazines by the couch, or clean clothes on the stairs ready to be taken up to the bedroom on the next trip up the stairs. The issue is that we may not see or maybe forget about those shoes blocking our path to the door and trip right over them. Also – rugs are great, but we have to make sure the edges of our beautiful rugs aren't sticking up. Good advice is to either get rid of your area rugs or to tape down the edges so that they don't become a trip hazard.

Stairs:

Stairs are great exercise, right?! What could be wrong with stairs? Well, actually, stairs can be quite the hazard, unless we take the necessary measures to make them safe. As mentioned before, leaving items on the stairs to take down or to carry up at a later time is often not a good idea. Those items can become trip hazards. Lighting on the stairs, both at the top and bottom, is very important to prevent stumbling around in the dark looking for the switch (and imagine if that pile of clothes is still on the stairs while you're stumbling around! EEK!) Handrails are your friend. Making sure they're secure is important, and it's even better if you have handrails on BOTH sides of the stairs. Make sure that carpet on stairs isn't coming up and if you have stairs with a smooth surface, stair treads are great for providing that extra traction that may help prevent a slip or fall.

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The “Can you hear me?” Scam is Still Ringing

By Tiffany Bernhardt Schultz, Southwest Wisconsin Regional Director
Better Business Bureau

The “Can you hear me?” scam has been targeting consumers for quite some time, and BBB continues to receive reports. The scam works like this:

You receive a call from someone who almost immediately asks, “Can you hear me?” Their goal is to get you to say “yes.” The person on the other end may make up a non-existent problem such as they are having problems with their headset. However, the “Yes” answer you give might be recorded to later scam you down the road, such as being edited by AI technology to make it sound like you authorized a major purchase. Sometimes, the caller will immediately hang up after you say “Yes.”

Tips to avoid this scam:

Use caller ID to screen calls. Don’t answer unfamiliar or unsolicited numbers. If the call is important, the caller will leave a message.

Only call back after you have researched the unsolicited call.

Just hang up. If the caller asks you if you can hear them, just hang up.

Join the Do Not Call Registry. If you’re not sure if you’re on the list, check donotcall.gov. If you’re not on the list, put yourself on it. This will help cut down on the number of calls you receive.

Check your bank statements. Check for unauthorized charges. It’s also a good idea to check your phone and cellular statements before you pay. Scammers may use your unauthorized “Yes” to authorize charges on your phone. This is called “cramming” and it’s illegal.

Report it to [BBB ScamTracker](#). Your report helps to warn others of the scams taking place in the marketplace.



Scam
Tracker SM

<https://www.bbb.org/scamtracker>

Alternatives to Traditional Gardening for Seniors

By Sarah Kruse, Communications Coordinator, AgeBetter, Inc.

Gardening is a beloved pastime for many, offering numerous physical and mental health benefits. However, traditional gardening can become challenging for seniors due to its physical demands. Fortunately, there are several alternatives that make gardening more accessible and enjoyable. Container gardening, co-gardening, and community gardens are excellent options to reduce the workload while still reaping the benefits of this fulfilling activity and connection with other gardeners.

Container Gardening is an ideal solution for older adults who want to enjoy gardening without the strain of maintaining large plots of land. This method involves growing plants in containers such as pots, planters, or raised beds, which can be placed on patios, balconies, or any small outdoor space. Container gardening reduces physical strain as the containers can be placed at a comfortable height, eliminating the need for bending and kneeling. Smaller containers are easier to weed, water, fertilize, and harvest if the container includes vegetables or herbs.

Co-Gardening is a collaborative approach where individuals share the responsibilities of gardening. This method allows seniors to garden with friends, family members, or neighbors, dividing the tasks to make it more manageable. Tasks such as planting, watering, and harvesting can be divided among participants, reducing the burden on any one person. Gardening together

also fosters social connections, combating loneliness, and improving mental well-being. Gardeners also learn from each other, sharing tips and techniques to improve the garden together.

Community Gardens are shared spaces where individuals or groups can cultivate plots of land together. These gardens provide an opportunity to engage in gardening within a supportive community setting. Tools, compost, and other gardening supplies are shared, making the financial investment of gardening more manageable. Gardeners often help each other with the difficult tasks making daunting tasks more attainable while also sharing knowledge and camaraderie.

For older adults, aging does not have to be the end of gardening. A little creativity and willingness to share the load can ensure that gardening remains a pleasurable and sustainable hobby for seniors.

Sharing Active Independent Lives (SAIL) volunteers create container gardens each spring to deliver to other members. Avid gardeners collect appropriate size pots; take requests for herbs, flowers, and vegetables; gather to create the beautiful spring and summer displays, and deliver them to the homes of those who requested them.

SAIL is a program of AgeBetter, Inc., a non-profit organization serving older adults in the greater Madison area.



From page 7, Lithium-ion Battery Safety

Even if the battery is apparently empty, it still can have enough energy in it to start a fire. Clean Sweep <https://landfill.danecounty.gov/services/clean-sweep> will take batteries and electronics, and City of Madison drop off sites take electronics and lithium-ion batteries.

What to do if a lithium-ion battery is damaged.

Do not try to charge it or use it. Don't try to

fix it or open it. Put it outside away from any structure and call a disposal company or Clean Sweep.

What to do if a Lithium-ion battery begins to smoke and overhead or catches fire.

Do not try to extinguish the fire. Many lithium-ion batteries emit toxic gases before igniting and the vapors can be dangerous to your health. Lithium-ion batteries can react negatively to water. Evacuate the area, close the door behind you and call 911.

From page 8, Your Home: Sanctuary or Fall Hazard ...

Kitchen and Bathroom:

I would argue that the kitchen and the bathroom are likely the two most important rooms in our sanctuaries. And they can also be the most dangerous. Those hard tiles and sharp edges make a fall in these rooms even more hazardous. Using a non-slip bathmat may help prevent a fall in the shower and having a grab bar (one that screws into the wall; not a suction cup) to aid with getting in and out of the shower is helpful. A raised toilet seat and a grab bar by the toilet can both be helpful when getting up from and sitting down onto the toilet. In the kitchen, try to keep items you use more often lower in the cabinets and shelves so that they're easier to reach. That comfy rug in front of the sink may feel great on your feet as you wash dishes, but just make sure it's secure and is taped down or has non-slip padding underneath.

Our homes are our sanctuaries, and we want to keep them that way! Simple adjustments and being mindful about our environment can help prevent a fall. Check out these great resources to help with home safety:

Falls Free Wisconsin Home Safety Challenge - Navigate through an actual house in WI and identify potential hazards and learn about how to make your own home safer: <https://fallsfreewi.org/prevent-falls/surround/interactive-home-walk-through/>

AgeBetter FREE Home Safety Assessments - If you are 60 or older in Dane County and would like a free home safety assessment, email info@agebettertoday.org or call 608-230-4445

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention - Helpful checklist that contains all the information discussed above: <https://www.cdc.gov/steady/pdf/STEADI-Brochure-CheckForSafety-508.pdf>

Editor: We hope this issue of the Triad Newsletter is useful and enjoyable to read. The newsletter is written by Triad volunteers and partners who want to help older adults live safer, healthier lives. If you would like to contribute an article, email mthomsen@rsvpdane.org.