

Did you know?

- Head injuries are the most common reason for equestrian-related deaths and hospitalization.
- Athletes involved in horse riding are more likely to suffer head injuries than those who play football, boxing or soccer.
- Riders aged 10-14 are more likely to have an accident with a horse than any other age group.
- A rider who has had one head injury has a 40 per cent chance of suffering a second one.

A doctor's experience

“Accidents happen at any time and anywhere. It doesn't matter if you're learning to ride or have been riding for years. As a doctor, I've seen both beginners and experienced riders suffer severe head injuries.

Every time I interact with my horse, whether I'm in the barn, field or riding, I put on a helmet. It only takes one accident to injure yourself for life.”

**-- Dr. Don Wescott, MD FRCS (C)
President, Doctors Nova Scotia
Co-owner of Deverness Stables**



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The Canadian Medical Association, the American Medical Equestrian Association and the American Medical Association recommend approved helmets be worn on all rides by all riders.



www.doctorsNS.com



Use your head, protect your brain



Wear a helmet

Keep yourself
safe while horseback riding.



Should be law

In Nova Scotia there's no legislation that requires riders to wear an approved helmet.

Ontario's *Horse Riding Safety Act*, passed in 2001, has significantly decreased the number of severe head injuries in that province so the Nova Scotia Equestrian Federation is interested in similar legislation.

Our responsibility

It's up to the horse industry to make the necessary changes surrounding helmet use while horseback riding.

Riders should never feel they must sacrifice wearing a safety helmet in order to be “part of the crowd” or to be successful in competition.

Parents, coaches and trainers must start setting the example by wearing an approved safety helmet at all times and, from there, children and clients will follow.

Helmet tips

- Wear only an ASTM SEI approved equestrian helmet when mounted on a horse.
- Bike and hockey helmets aren't safe to use when horseback riding.
- Helmets should be replaced after an impact or every two to three years, depending on wear.

Competition rules

Equine Canada's General Regulations state that all junior competitors must wear an approved safety helmet while mounted anywhere on the competition grounds.

Discipline-specific rules (e.g. Dressage, Western) can supersede EC General Regulations. Breed organizations require the use of safety helmets in jumping classes.

The NSEF strongly recommends the use of approved helmets by all competitors, regardless of age and discipline.

Riding safety tips

- Wear a boot with a heel when mounted on a horse.
- Know and obey all rules of the road when riding on public roads and trails.
- Never ride alone or at night.
- Keep first aid equipment with you when on a trail.
- Always carry a cell phone when travelling outside of your property.
- Check your horse's tack and equipment to ensure they are in good repair. A well-fitting saddle and bridle is a must.

Stereotype concerns

Traditionally, English riders wear helmets, Dressage riders wear top hats, and Western riders wear cowboy hats.

This stereotype describes the equestrian world that remains steeped in years of tradition with a stigma in some disciplines against wearing helmets, even for protection of its youth or junior members.

Studies have found horse racing to have the highest mortality rate of all sports.

True helmet stories

Jessica Swinkels of Antigonish County was thrown from her horse while out on a pleasure ride. She fell and bumped her head on a train track and suffered a skull fracture. She credits her helmet with saving her life.

Patricia Moore, an experienced barrel racer and rodeo contestant from Ontario, died from severe head injuries in 2005 when her horse stumbled and fell to the ground after leaving the ring. Pat wasn't wearing a helmet.