

What to Know About Recreational Biking

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With spring here we see a lot of people out riding bicycles. Recreational bike riding is highly recommended to increase heart rate, build strength, and rehabilitate injuries. Biking, like any other form of exercise, should be started gradually. It is important to have the proper bicycle and protective equipment. Having a bike to fit your size will help reduce the chance of injury. If there is too much reach between the seat and the handlebars, riders will have to force their necks downward which can cause pain and stiffness in the neck and upper back. Another problem caused by too much reach between the seat and the handlebars can be hand numbness due to the excessive weight resting on your wrists and hands. The seat height is another factor to consider when fitting a bike. For proper seat height, you want a slight bend in the knee when the pedal is in its full down position. You can hyperextend your knee if you go into full extension on the downstroke. Not only do you need a bike that is properly fit to you, you also need the proper equipment such as a helmet and good shoes.

Having the right bike and all the right equipment is good, but it is also important to start out slow with your bike riding. It is best to stay in shape all year round, but if you do slack off during the winter then it is best to gradually work into an exercise program. When riding, start in slower gears with less resistance and work your way up to more resistance and longer rides. Taking frequent breaks and staying well hydrated is also important in preventing injuries and increased soreness during biking. Delayed onset muscle soreness is common with biking. Although the pain is usually mild, on both sides of the body, it will begin within 24 hours after vigorous activity. If pain is sharp, located on one side of the body, and does not subside within a day or two, you may have a more serious injury. In the case of a more serious injury, you should use the "RICE" protocol: rest, ice, compression and elevation. If your muscle strain does not seem to improve within two weeks, you may want to see your doctor or physical therapist for further evaluation and care.

Enjoy your biking, but remember to start slow and be safe.