

**MARBLEHEAD REPORTER**

# Cycle Sense

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Published 10:00 a.m. ET Jul. 9, 2020

It is Fourth of July week and the official start of summer. It also marks the fourth month since we quickly pivoted our behavior to follow the Massachusetts stay-at-home advisory and subsequent public health directives to control the spread of coronavirus. To the credit of local officials and the discipline of residents, key statewide metrics for monitoring the virus are stable or improving. We are among the small number of states with improving trends while cautiously reopening. It may seem completely natural to associate reopening businesses and resuming activities with relaxed personal behavior. But, from the public health viewpoint, this is not the case. In fact, basic practices like distancing and wearing a mask are just as, or even more important, than previously thought. This very same mentality applies to bicycling.

With this in mind, it is a good time to review tips for riding during the pandemic, compiled by the League of American Bicyclists. Overall, riding now is very safe and a part of our fundamental need for recreation. This is a changing situation, so check federal (CDC), state (<http://mass.gov>) and local (Board of Health) requirements regularly.

- Perhaps most important, ride alone or with members of your household. Follow local guidelines for expanding your social network, but keep in mind the safest rides are solo.
- Try to maintain 6 feet of space from others. When riding with others, ride side-by-side with spacing or 20 feet behind the next rider.
- Wear an athletic mask or cycling buff that covers your nose and mouth when riding around others, particularly within six feet.
- Avoid spitting, an uncovered cough, nasal drip or other droplet transmission — and wash your hands.
- Find less crowded places and routes to ride; avoid the most traveled paths.
- If you are feeling ill, please stay home.

A consequence of the recent resurgence in the popularity of bicycling is the occasional overcrowding on the most popular routes and paths. Locally, that is most noticeable on our Rail Trail. It is important that everyone follows the same rules to have a safe and enjoyable time. Most of us already do. But here is a gentle reminder for all. Be cautious. Walkers, runners, and cyclists of all ages use the trail. It is narrow in places and the surface is not designed for speed. Be courteous. Cyclists must yield to runners and walkers and alert them when passing by ringing a bell, or saying, “Passing on your left.” Practice distancing and wear your mask. Be predictable and do not use more than half of the trail. Check out this link: <https://youtu.be/XEBFJDpCVvk>.

A Google search of the top bike safety recommendation is what? We all know: Wear a helmet. Sadly, we don’t all do it. There is no magic solution that will make every child, adolescent and adult wear their helmet, but here is a suggestion. If every parent wore a helmet while teaching or riding with their children, we would be a lot better off. Be the role model to change the behavior. Helmets provide no protection if they are not worn. Also, wearing a helmet improperly can be the same as not wearing one at all. Helmets come in different sizes, so make sure you have one that fits you. When it’s on your head without the straps fastened, there should be little movement when you move your head from side to side. Other strap adjustments are highlighted in the graphic. A correctly sized and fitted helmet can be as comfortable as wearing a favorite baseball cap — and a lot safer.

*This is the fifth in a series of articles about bicycling and bicycle safety. The author is affiliated with Sustainable Marblehead (<http://sustainablemarblehead.org>), BIKE Marblehead, MassBike (<http://massbike.org>), and is a League of American Bicyclists certified instructor (<http://bikeleague.org>). Source material from LAB appears in this article.*