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MILWAUKEE, WI – Bicycling is a healthy way to experience the outdoors and incorporate physical activity into an individual's daily life. It's a flexible activity – not limited to certain ages or intensity levels – that keeps people moving, helps with weight control, and provides enjoyment. With summer in full swing, TOPS Club, Inc. (Take Off Pounds Sensibly), the nonprofit weight-loss support organization, offers tips for safe cycling. Whether you are a member of TOPS or not, use these ideas to stay fit and cycle sensibly.

1. Good fit makes you fit. When choosing a bike, make sure the frame is appropriate. To find the right fit, straddle the bike and stand flatfooted. There should be at least one inch of clearance between your groin and the top tube and two inches on a mountain bike.

2. Location, location, location. The handlebars and seat should be positioned correctly for a comfortable, optimal ride. The seat should be located high or low enough so each knee is bent only slightly at the bottom of each rotation. Seats are not "one size fits all" and should be appropriate to your build and riding situation.

3. You're not as hardheaded as you think. Always wear a helmet when you ride. This simple rule protects you from head trauma and brain injury. The helmet should have a bright, visible color and snug fit that covers as much of your head as possible.

4. Nighttime is not the right time. Avoid riding your bike at night. Most cycling accidents occur between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. when light levels are low. If you must ride in low-light conditions, wear brightly colored, reflective gear and install a bright headlight and blinking red taillight for better visibility.

5. Give your brakes a break. Gently and firmly pump brakes at the same time. Don't squeeze the brakes too hard – and never squeeze the front brake first.

6. Know the rules of the road. Attach a rear-view mirror to your helmet, handlebar, or eyewear. Ride with traffic, obey all traffic rules, and yield the right-of-way to pedestrians and other vehicles. Observe your surroundings and communicate with drivers, using hand signals and eye contact.

7. What's your hurry? If you're out of shape or unaccustomed to riding, start slowly. Thirty minutes on a flat terrain is a good way to start for the first few weeks. Gradually work up to greater intensity and hillier terrain for better workouts.

8. Be kind to your body. Cycling should not involve stress or strain. Keep your arms and shoulders relaxed and avoid locking your elbows. Shift your hand and body positions frequently.

9. Share the ride. Riding with another person – or as part of a group – can motivate you to become a better cyclist and make the miles fly by more quickly.

10. Variety is the spice of life. Cycling should not be your only workout. It is not a weight-bearing exercise, so be sure to vary your fitness routine with walking, weightlifting, and

other activities.

TOPS Club Inc. (Take Off Pounds Sensibly), the original, nonprofit weight-loss support and wellness education organization, was established more than 63 years ago to champion weight-loss support and success. Founded and headquartered in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, TOPS promotes successful, affordable weight management with a philosophy that combines healthy eating, regular exercise, wellness information, and support from others at weekly chapter meetings. TOPS has about 170,000 members in nearly 10,000 chapters throughout the United States and Canada.

Visitors are welcome to attend their first TOPS meeting free of charge. To find a local chapter, view www.tops.org or call (800) 932-8677 .

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