

FACTSHEET



This fact sheet is for education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professionals to make sure this information is right for your child. If you would like to provide feedback on this fact sheet, please visit: www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/fact-sheets/feedback-form.

Off-road motorcycle safety

Off road motorcycles are 2-wheeled vehicles that require the user to shift their body weight while riding. People do not need a licence to ride them as long as they are not on public roads.

Off-road motorcycles are popular for sports and recreation but also farm use as well.



How may a child be injured?

Injuries occur in a variety of settings (e.g. at home, on farms, in recreational areas and at Motocross competitions). Children sustain injuries from collisions, rollovers, falls and from jumps. Children may collide with objects and other riders, causing injuries to themselves and others. Loss of control is the most common cause of injury. This is because children aged less than 10 years lack hazard perception and the ability to control speed.

Falls

- Falls may result in severe fractures, abdominal, head and chest injuries.

Cuts and bruises

- Children may sustain cuts and bruises, particularly when they are not wearing full body protective clothing.

Strangulation

- Children may suffer strangulation if riding under a clothesline or fence. This injury occurs during times of poor visibility or if terrain is uneven.

Struck by object

- Children may collide with objects and other riders, causing injury to themselves and others.
- Children may be injured when the motorcycle tips over and falls on them.

How common are these injuries?

In NSW, between 2003 and 2012, there were 13 deaths of children aged 0-17 years, from off-road motorcycles, otherwise known as a "dirt bikes".¹

- All were male riders with no passengers
- The average age was 14 years.
- Six (46.2%) incidents occurred in settings that required a licence and bike registration due to their use in state forests and on roads, however, none of the children had a licence or a registered bike.
- Ten (76.9%) were single vehicle collisions or the child came off the bike and three (23.1%) involved a collision with another motorcycle.
- Helmet use was high, where known (82%).
- Supervision was not present in seven of the 12 cases, where known (58%).

The likelihood of serious injuries rapidly increases when riders start doing jumps. Children injured from jumps suffer more severe injuries.

Research shows that the use of helmets reduces the risk of death by 42%.

Is there a Law or an Australian Standard for off-road motorcycles?

Riders of motorcycles on NSW roads must be at least 16 years and nine months and obtain a rider licence by completing a training course and knowledge test. However there are no requirements to use motorcycles off-road on private property.

Significant fines apply for riding off-road motorcycles on public land, which includes State Forests and National Parks.

The requirements for protective equipment depend on the motorcycle sport, but generally include the following.²

- **Helmet** - an approved helmet, such as one that carries the Standards Association of Australia "AS 1698" label
- **Clothing** - trousers of leather or synthetic material of similar durability
- **Clothing** - a jersey made of close knit fabric of natural or synthetic fibre
- **Boots** - recognised Motocross style boots that cover at least ¾ of the length of the lower leg
- **Gloves**
- **Goggles or eye protection**
- **Back protector**
- **Body armour**

Remember:

The Children's Hospital at Westmead recommends that children aged less than 10 years do not use motorcycles. They do not have the skills and judgement to handle a powered motorcycle. Young children also lack hazard perception.

- Read the owner's manual and be aware of the manufacturer's warnings and age recommendations.
- Inspect bikes each time, before riding.
- Wear a helmet and full protective clothing at all times when riding, including suitable clothing, boots, gloves and goggles.
- Never take passengers.
- Ensure others know where they are riding and when they are expected home.
- Receive formal training and ride in supervised conditions.
- Jumps should only be performed after receiving formal training
- Avoid using homemade jumps.

References

1. Child Death Review Team (2013) Annual Report 2012. Sydney: NSW Ombudsman.
2. Motorcycling Australia (2016) 2016 Manual of Motorcycle Sport. Available from: http://www.ma.org.au/fileadmin/user_upload/Documents/MOMS/2016_MoMS.pdf