

Tips for riding in summer heat

Summer heat can make bicycling uncomfortable and downright dangerous. Below are some suggestions for coping with summer weather. Most of this advice is fairly common-sense, but it never hurts to hear it again.

Plan. Plan trips well ahead of time, and give yourself enough time to ride *and* recover. Know how long you can comfortably stay outside and therefore how far you can safely ride (generally under an hour; ideally under 30 minutes). Select routes that allow you to keep moving with fewer or shorter stops. Try to locate and follow shaded routes, or routes traveling through cooler areas (i.e. flood-irrigated neighborhoods). Check for public pools, stores, malls, or other potential cooling points along your route. Carry emergency bus money, and research where and when bus routes are available.

Acclimate. Start out riding slowly and avoid the hottest parts of the day (10 am to 4 pm). If you're just getting started with commuting by bicycle, you might want to make the switch gradually instead of trying to dive in during the summer heat. Dress strategically: consider whether dry-wicking clothing and sunscreen work best for you, or if you'd prefer light, loose, long-sleeved cotton for sun coverage.

Hydrate. "Eat before you're hungry and drink before you're thirsty". Drink lots of water before, during, and after riding, beginning up to a day ahead of your ride. Always carry plenty of water and don't be afraid to ask businesses to refill water bottles. If you wait until you're thirsty, you are usually not drinking enough and it may already be too late to avoid heat exhaustion. A good indicator of good hydration is the need to urinate once an hour.

Avoid Heat Exhaustion. Learn to recognize your body's signs of heat exhaustion, which are similar to signs of fever. Initial signs can be subtle, so know them and pay attention. At the first signs of heat exhaustion: back off. Relax your pace, and increase your fluid intake, especially if you have stopped feeling thirsty. If you do not recover within 10-20 minutes, immediately find air conditioning or shade, and be prepared to call 911. Heat stroke can occur quickly and it is potentially fatal, so don't try to tough it out, even if you only need to travel a short remaining distance. Lastly, if you get a flat tire or have mechanical problems, be sure to seek out shade or a place indoors for repairs.



Commuting Resources

Here are some starting points for learning more about commuting, or brushing up on what you know (or think you know).

AZ Bicycling Street Smarts: A great starting point for learning how to ride confidently, legally, and safely on Arizona roadways.

www.azbikeped.org/azbss.htm

How to Not Get Hit By Cars: Diagrams of the most common accident scenarios and how to avoid them or reduce the impact of an unavoidable accident.

www.bicyclesafe.com

Cycling at Night: Guidelines for how to improve your visibility and safety at night.

humantransport.org/bicycledriving/library/lights/lights.htm

City of Mesa Bicycling Information: Mesa has put together a 10-page booklet on bicycling basics, including some guidelines for teaching children to ride—see “Bike Map Information” towards the bottom of the page.

www.cityofmesa.net/transportation/Bicycle_Program.aspx

Paul Dorn’s Bike Commuting Tips: Details on many aspects of commuting by bicycle (bikes, routes, locks, etc.), lessons learned over the course of years.

www.runmuki.com/commute

Bikecommuters.com: A blog about commuting by bicycle, written by a team of commuters from across the U.S.

www.bikecommuters.com/

Team Wonderbike: A program by New Belgium Brewery to encourage more people to enjoy riding bicycles.

www.newbelgium.com/wonderbike.php

Lastly, check in with the TBAG blog (www.biketempe.org) for information on local events and clinics where you can learn new skills, share what you’ve learned with fellow cyclists, and get to know the faces on the road.

