

Gear important for pleasant cycling experience

By Chris Kozłowski

Biking season is in full swing for mountain and road riders alike. Here are a few pointers to keep you riding smoother, safer, and more comfortably throughout the season.

Don't wear underwear under bike shorts. I've had this conversation with several patients and it's worth mentioning, loudly and boldly. Bike shorts are supposed to be worn commando and without undergarments. It decreases chafing from seams and makes the ride more pleasant. I promise.



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Wear bike shorts. The extra cushion and protection will make your ride better. A good pair is worth the purchase. Cycling shorts will also decrease hand pressure by limiting weight you push on the handle bars and putting less weight on your bum.

Inspect your bike seat. Increased pressure in the hands may also come from your bike seat's position. If the seat's nose is tilted up, your arms may automatically pushing you off the nose with the weight in your hands. If the seat's nose is tilted down, you could be sliding down and using your hands to push yourself back up on the seat. Millimeters can make a difference in seat positioning.

Wear gloves. Cycling gloves offer protection and varying degrees of padding depending upon the gloves you buy. Some riders like the flexibility and accessibility of fingerless gloves, while others prefer the warmth and protection from full fingered gloves. Whichever you choose, gloves decrease the pressure in your hands and protect the hands and wrists from sudden unplanned vertical drops into rocks or pavement.

Bend your elbows. Keep about 10 degrees of flex in your elbows to absorb the road shock. Mountain bikers typically flex their elbows, but I see a lot of roadies locking out their elbows. A slight flex will decrease the shock absorbed and increase comfort from your hands to your neck.

Wear bike shoes. Mountain bike and road cycling shoes are built with a firmer sole to increase pedaling efficiency. Your tennis or running shoes aren't optimal for pedaling due to the increased flex in the shoe. This little variation makes a big difference, especially when climbing uphill. If you're riding platform or clipless pedals, the pedals that attach to cycling shoes, make sure the pedals have the proper grip and your shoes won't slide off the pedal. Clipless pedals increase efficiency upward of 30 percent.

Avoid mashing. Your pedals should spin smoothly while clipped in. This increases efficiency and avoids "mashing." Mashing occurs when you use your leg strength in an up and down piston motion, like mashing potatoes, on every stroke instead of spinning in a circle motion.

Ride on the right side. If a car is coming at you, you're on the wrong side. California and Nevada bicycle laws state bikers ride with the flow of car traffic and as close to the right as possible. This is safer for you, other bikers, and drivers.

I know some advice is gear related and will cost money. But it will buy you comfort, which will make you happier and more

likely to ride a bike, which will save you gas money, and cover the cost of the new bike shorts. Now go outside and ride.

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