

Safety for Women on Wheels

Now that spring is here, it's time for everyone to get out their bikes. Unfortunately, studies show there is still a glaring gap between the number of men and women riding on our pathways and trails; in fact up to three times as many by some studies done in the United States. Why? Are we afraid to get our hair messed up? Definitely not! Women and girls are passionate about the outdoors but don't experience the same level of security as our gender counterparts.

A 2009 Scientific America study referred to women as an “indicator species” for healthy cycling environments. When parks and paths are designed for safety, women are there.

While nature is appealing for its beauty and reclusiveness women should avoid paths that are:

- poorly lit,
- seem abandoned
- are near untrimmed and unmonitored vegetation, and
- are located far from populated areas.

Look for paths that have signs to main exits, washrooms, first aid and information centre. They should have mileage markers and maps.

There is always safety in numbers, consider biking in groups. If you bike alone, vary your routes, and let someone know where you are going and when you'll be back.

Ensure that your bike is in good repair. Be prepared for a breakdown by carrying a small tool kit and know how to do some basic repairs. If you see someone in need of help don't feel you need to stop. Trust your instincts. Instead tell them you will bike ahead and call for help.

When parking your bike, consider where bike racks are located. Underground lots and building corners maybe practical in terms of space, but they are isolated and can prove to be an entrapment site for women. Use bike racks that are located in well lit, open and populated areas.

We want to see more women and girls out there cycling and enjoying our beautiful city. Pop that helmet on, ensure your bike is in good working order, slip your cell phone in your pocket, and put the pedal to the concrete!

To learn more about keeping yourself safe, contact WISE for more tips on safety at 613-230-6700.