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A Bicycle Built For You

Bicycling season is here. This is a great recreational activity that can help you enjoy the scenery at a slow pace with low noise level or do an errand while getting some physical activity. To get the most enjoyment from bicycling, make certain that your bicycle fits your body size and physical uniqueness.

A correct bike frame size for an individual's body is determined by straddling over the horizontal bar, between the handlebars and the seat. There should be a one inch distance between the horizontal bar and your buttocks. This distance to the ground should allow for quick leg /foot movement from the pedal to the ground in order



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to avoid falling. The seat should be high enough that when one knee is almost straight, with the pedal at the bottom, the opposite knee is slightly below your hip level. The bike seat should be flat. If you are shifting from side to side on the seat when pedaling, the seat is too high. This is a potential source of back pain. If you are sliding forward on the seat, it is tilted forward, putting too much strain on the back and arms. A seat tilted backwards may cause undue strain on the back or pain in the 'saddle' area.

Road racing bikes have handle bars that are low for better aerodynamics. For someone with limited neck movement, elevated handlebars would be more comfortable and provide a better visual field. A mirror further improves one's visual field. Elevated handlebars also help to reduce the potential for neck and back pain.

I enquired with three Saint John bicycle shops about the availability of bikes with elevated handle bars. There were some bicycles with elevated handlebars that had one gear. However, there were hybrid bikes available with multiple gears that had handlebars which were not only adjustable for height but for angle as well. These hybrids have an added feature of front and back wheel shocks which provide even more shock absorption for the arms, neck and back. An adjustable handlebar is available as an attachment if you want to change this on your current bicycle.

The benefits of bicycling are cardiovascular exercise and improving strength and endurance of the thigh and lower leg muscles and to a lesser degree, the abdominal muscles.

There is less force through the knees and ankles than during weight bearing activities, thus reducing compression related knee pain. By keeping your knees in line with your hips and ankles you will reduce the chance of bicycling related knee pain. As your thigh muscles get stronger, your knees will have better support, potentially improving already present knee pain.

A properly fitting bicycle (moving or stationary) may reduce already present knee pain and the potential for bicycling associated pain as well as reducing the risk of falling off your bike and suffering a head injury. A non-optional helmet is, of course, the most important element of bicycle safety. ***Then you'll feel sweet, upon the seat of a bicycle built for you!***



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