

## KNOW THE LINGO

Group cycling has its own form of communication. The presence of road hazards, directions, and need-to-know information is relayed through the pack of riders by gestures and words. Remember to pass all communication on to the next cyclist behind you in the group. Speak loudly and clearly. The following are the most common terms you may hear in group-sponsored rides:

- **On Your Left:** This means a rider is approaching your left side. Allow room to pass.
- **Car Back:** This means a car is approaching from the rear. All riders make an effort to move to the right of the road in a single file until the car passes. In most states, the law requires cyclists to ride no more than two abreast. This ensures passing is easier and safer for the cyclists.
- **Gravel - Pothole - Sand - Tracks:** Each of these messages is to alert the riders behind you of hazardous road conditions. The words are combined with the gesture of pointing to the hazard well in advance.
- **Flat:** This indicates that a rider has suffered a flat tire. Allow enough room for the rider to slow down and move to the right side of the road or trail for repair. Offer assistance if needed.
- **Slowing:** The cyclist in front of you is slowing down. Use caution and prepare to stop. Many cyclists use the palm of their hand toward riders behind them to indicate slowing and stopping.
- **Stopping:** This indicates that a rider ahead is stopping. Do not forget to unclip.

Headphones, cell phones, radios, ear buds, and similar audio devices are not permitted while riding.

## HELPFUL TIPS

At Bike MS events, our active route support team works to make the ride safe. Here are a few additional suggestions to help keep everyone safe on the ride:

- **Helmet Off For Help:** SAG vehicles and motorcycle escorts will stop for you if you are off the road, off your bike, and waving your helmet in the air above your head.
- **Ride Marshal Support:** A special team of cyclists called Ride Marshals provide support on the rides. They are safety and good-will ambassadors who monitor cycling safety and etiquette.
- **Rest stop etiquette:** All cyclists who enter a rest area must pull over, dismount and move completely away from the road and rest-stop entrance. When exiting, move beyond the rest area and proceed with caution on the right side of the road before merging with faster cyclists.
- **Passing:** Passing and being passed occurs continuously during the ride. Call out “passing on your left” and allow time for the cyclist being overtaken to move to the right then pass safely.
- **Mechanical problems:** Examine mechanical problems and change flats completely off the road. If you have a problem you cannot fix yourself, flag down a SAG van and seek a mechanic at the next rest stop.
- **Be courteous:** Bike MS cyclists are privileged to ride on many trails as well as public roads. Be courteous and use no more than half the trail or roadway so as not to block the flow of other users.



## HYDRATION

Knowing how to optimize your fluid intake is critical to successfully completing a Bike MS ride.

The goal of drinking water and hydrating fluids is to prevent dehydration. There are several factors that contribute to dehydration:

- increased core temperature
- loss of body fluids
- loss of electrolytes

The most common reason for dehydration is from not consuming enough fluids before, during and after a long ride. The rule of thumb is that athletes should lose no more than 2% body weight from sweat loss. To determine this, riders should weigh in before and after drying off from training. Once 2% or greater is lost, signs of dehydration set in. Water or enhanced fitness water is an appropriate fluid replacement beverage for exercise lasting less than 1 hour.

Sports drinks are appropriate for exercise exceeding 1.5 hours. Caution with fruit juice, soda and concentrated fructose drinks because they absorb more slowly and may cause an upset stomach.

### HYDRATION GUIDELINES

- Begin ride in normal hydration. Urine color should be pale, similar to lemonade. If urine is dark, consume 8-20 oz fluid 4 hours prior to riding. If urine remains dark, drink additional 4-8 oz within 2 hours of riding.
- Drink 4-8 oz every 15-20 minutes during exercise
- Drink 20-24 oz for every pound of body weight lost after exercise
- If you find that you experience extreme fatigue, the inability to recover your energy or frequent muscle cramps, seek assistance from first aid. You may have the early signs of dehydration.

- If you find that you experience weight gain/bloating with progressive symptoms such as swollen hands and feet, confusion, throbbing headache, dizziness or nausea, immediately seek assistance from first aid.

### HYDRATION INFORMATION PROVIDED COURTESY OF:

Brett Singer RD, CSSD, LD  
Sports Dietitian  
Memorial Hermann IRONMAN Sports  
Medicine Institute

## SPECIAL SITUATIONS

Many cyclists find that situations occur when quick thinking and heightened bike-handling skills are required. Here are some suggestions for managing potential obstacles:

- **Cars Can Be Scary:** Drivers do not know your skill level, and will often not leave room when they pass. Give them the room. In a group, call out “car back” or “car up” and move to the far right in a single file. Be predictable.
- **Beware Of Animals:** Knowing how to handle animals, specifically dogs, on a bicycle varies depending on the situation. You may want to slow down, outspurt the dog, or yell “stop,” “no” or “go home.” Distracting a dog with a water bottle should only be used when you are not in a pack. Try to keep to one side of the dog. Let others know of your intentions.
- **Pedestrians, Joggers & Animals Have The Right-Of-Way:** Signal to the pack that someone is being overtaken and move to allow room for safe passing.

Printing courtesy of CenterPoint Energy



Always There.™

bike  
MS



SAFETY  
IN GROUP CYCLING

#BIKEMS  
BIKEMS.ORG

Don't just ride, Bike MS



## SAFETY STARTS WITH YOU

Cyclists need to possess basic bike-handling skills and safety knowledge in order to keep themselves and others around them safe, especially while participating in group cycling activities, like the Bike MS events. Our focus is to provide a high quality, safe and fun bicycling experience. For this reason, the National MS Society has partnered with the League of American Bicyclists to provide our cyclists with the knowledge and resources to cycle safely.

Please contact the National MS Society about our Group Riding Skills courses which are designed to provide you with the principles of group riding so you can safely enjoy riding in group rides.

### REMEMBER TO ALWAYS CARRY

- Identification
- Emergency contact information
- Insurance card
- Any important health information

## “ABC QUICK CHECK”

All cyclists are responsible for keeping their riding equipment in good working order, so get into the habit of checking your equipment before every ride. Small adjustments can make a significant difference in your experience. The “ABC Quick Check” is an overall, yet brief bicycle safety check .

### A IS FOR AIR

- Check your wheels for worn tires, loose spokes, warped rims and tires for proper inflation.

### B IS FOR BRAKES

- Check brakes for function, cable tightness, worn pads, frayed cables, and alignment of the pads with the rims.

### C IS FOR CRANKS, CHAIN AND CASSETTE

- Check your pedals and cranks for tightness.

- Check for chain looseness and bad links; clean regularly. Lubricate with bicycle chain lube.
- Check the derailleur for worn cogs and adjustment.
- Check that your gears change smoothly.

### QUICK IS FOR QUICK RELEASES

Check to ensure that the wheels are clamped securely in the drop-outs before each ride.

### CHECK IS FOR CHECK

Check your helmet for cracks and make sure it fits properly. Check your handlebar for looseness at the headset and stem. Check your shoes for tight cleats and straps and buckles in good repair. Make sure your bicycle saddle is the right height and the bolt is tight.

## HELMET SMART

Head injuries are a special concern for cyclists. Even falling at a slow rate of speed can cause a serious head injury. Helmets must be on your head, buckled and adjusted properly while riding in a Bike MS event —**NO EXCEPTIONS.**

Ask any Ride Marshal to check your helmet for proper helmet fit.

## BICYCLE LAWS

All states consider cyclists vehicle operators, and give them the same rights and responsibilities as other drivers.

- **Know & Obey All Traffic Laws:** The golden rule of bicycling in a group is be predictable!
- **Stay Right:** Ride in the right portion of the right most lane in the direction you are traveling and leave at least four feet between your handlebars and parked cars or other hazards. You may move left when passing slower vehicles or preparing for a left turn.
- **Obey all traffic signs and signals:** Avoid “following the leader” through traffic signs and signals; you are

required to obey all traffic signs and signals, including stopping at red lights and stop signs. Never call out “clear” when crossing an intersection. Each rider is responsible for their own safety.

- **Look & Signal Before You Move:** Always scan behind you before changing lanes or making turns. A continuous arm signal is required prior to a turn or lane change (unless arm is needed to control the bike) and while stopped waiting to turn.
- **Two At A Time:** Ride no more than two abreast and do not impede traffic. If a part of the road has been closed and dedicated to “bicycle travel only” you may ride more than two abreast.
- **Hands On The Handlebars:** When riding, keep at least one hand on the handlebars – two are safer: it’s the law: 551.102c. Do not carry anything that prevents keeping both hands on the handlebars.
- **Pass With Care:** Do not pass at intersections. Always call out before passing and only pass on the left, if it is safe to do so. Always wait for approaching vehicles to pass or for riders to move

## THE BASICS OF RIDING IN A GROUP

Group riding takes practice. Riding with other cyclists all around you may cause you to feel trapped. Relax. It is most important to create your own safety zone.

This may vary depending on the speed and ability level of the people you are with, so be flexible. Let others know your experience level; they may also be new at this.

### Your responsibility in a pack includes:

- Be aware of others around you.
- Communicate well in advance.
- Use gestures in combination with verbal commands.
- Ride with your head up. Look down the road; not at the person in front of you.
- Maintain control and speed of your bike, even going downhill.

- Know your limits. Crashes can occur when inexperienced riders do not have bike-handling skills to make quick decisions in a pack.
- Safety starts with you. Group mentality is not always safe. Expect to stop at all red lights and stop signs—it is the law! Each cyclist is responsible for verifying that the intersection is clear.
- Adjust your safety zone to fit the conditions of the road, weather and traffic. Always plan an escape route.
- Never overlap your wheels with another cyclist.
- Do not use aerobars in a pack.
- Be aware of how weather will affect your bike. Riding in wet conditions requires slower speeds and greater breaking distances.
- Be respectful of other riders. Help others when needed.

## CYCLING FOR MINORS 101: RULES OF THE ROAD FOR CYCLISTS & PARENTS

- Your family has joined the movement and together, you are cycling to create a world free of MS!
- The National MS Society wants you to cycle safely. It is important to understand that there are risks associated with cycling and road rides. It is critical that parents, guardians and their children understand these risks and are comfortable that a young cyclist has both the skills and judgment to ride safely. This is especially important while participating in group cycling activities like Bike MS. Our focus is to provide a high quality, safe and fun bicycling experience. Following are some of the considerations that a young cyclist and their parent or guardian should make when participating in the ride.
- Minors (under 18 years old) MUST be accompanied by a parent, guardian or

responsible adult over 21 years of age at all times – on and off the route.

- All cyclists, including minors, need to possess basic bike handling skills and safety knowledge to keep themselves and others around them safe.
- Parents must review the rules of the road with their children in advance of the ride to make sure they understand and can follow them.
- Each cyclist must always carry identification, emergency contact information and insurance cards while riding and participating in a Bike MS event.
- Headphones, cell phones, radios and similar radio devices are not permitted while riding.
- • The route is not closed to traffic, so cyclists need to exercise caution at all times and obey all rules of the road.
- There will be many cyclists on the course, so young cyclists should fully understand rider etiquette and how to ride in large groups.
- This is a fun ride and not a race. All cyclists should ride at a comfortable pace and take full advantage of route support whenever needed.
- Alcohol may be served and identification will be checked. Please remind young riders that they must be “of age” (21 or older) to consume alcohol during the event.
- In partnership with the League of American Bicyclists, the Society has developed materials and coursework that provide good, basic information about bicycle safety and riding in a group such as “Bicycling Safety Tips for Adults” video from League of American Bicyclists located on YouTube, review this entire brochure and participate in a Group Riding skills class and review the Group Riding Student Manual and ask your local Society office for more information.