

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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***March is Brain Injury Awareness Month***  
***Safe Kids Northeast Florida/Wolfson Children's Hospital***  
***Reminds Parents: Bike Helmets Save Brains and Lives***

*Jacksonville, FL, February 24, 2006* – Properly fitted bike helmets could reduce the risk of bike-related brain injuries by 88 percent; however, only one out of five cyclists ages five to 14 usually wears a helmet. Each year in the United States, more than 100 children die from bicycle-related injuries, and more than a quarter million are treated in emergency rooms. Nearly half (47 percent) have traumatic brain injuries.

“A bike helmet is essential safety gear,” says Cynthia Dennis, RN, Safe Kids Northeast Florida coordinator. “Helmets could prevent an estimated 75 percent of bike-related fatalities and 45,000 head injuries to children each year.” In Florida, children under age 16 are required by law to wear a helmet at all times while riding a bicycle.

A helmet should be labeled to indicate that it is certified by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). As long as it's certified and brand new, Dennis says, “Let kids pick out their own helmets. If they think a helmet looks cool, they'll be more likely to wear it when you're not around.”

Safe Kids Northeast Florida and Wolfson Children's Hospital also remind parents and caregivers to:

- **Make sure the helmet fits and your kids know how to put it on correctly.** In a crash, the risk of head injury is doubled if the helmet is worn incorrectly. A helmet should sit on top of the head in a level position, and should not rock forward and backward or side to side. The helmet straps must always be buckled, but not too tightly. Safe Kids recommends the “eyes, ears and mouth” test: the rim of the helmet should be one to two finger-widths above the eyebrows, the straps should form a “V” just below the ear lobe, the buckle should be flat against the skin and the strap should feel snug when the rider's mouth is open.
- **Remember, bike helmets are for riding bikes and other human-powered wheels.** Kids should not wear bike helmets on the playground (where the straps can get caught on equipment and cause injury) or for activities that require specialized helmets (such as skiing or football). Bike helmets are appropriate for roller skating, inline skating and skateboarding without aerial stunts, and for use with non-motorized scooters. The

American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons recommends that children under 12 wear a bike helmet while sledding.

- **When in doubt, get help.** The sales staff at any bicycle shop or outdoor recreation store should be able to provide expert advice on fitting and adjusting bikes and helmets. For more information, visit [www.usa.safekids.org](http://www.usa.safekids.org).

Brain Injury Awareness Month is observed annually by the Brain Injury Association of America, [www.biausa.org](http://www.biausa.org), which reports there are at least 5.3 million Americans living with long-term disabilities due to traumatic brain injury, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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*Safe Kids Northeast Florida works to prevent accidental childhood injury, the leading killer of children 14 and under. . Safe Kids Northeast Florida is a local chapter of Safe Kids Florida Coalition, a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing accidental injury. Safe Kids Northeast Florida was founded in 2003 and is led by Wolfson Children's Hospital.*

*Baptist Health is a faith-based, mission-driven system comprised of Baptist Medical Center Downtown, Baptist Heart Hospital, Baptist Medical Center Beaches, Baptist Medical Center Nassau; Baptist Medical Center South and Wolfson Children's Hospital -- Jacksonville's only children's hospital. Baptist Health also includes cardiology and cardiovascular surgery services, a comprehensive cancer center, orthopaedic institute, women's resource center, a full range of psychology and psychiatry services, outpatient facilities and a network of primary care physicians' offices throughout Northeast Florida. Baptist Health is the official healthcare provider for the Jacksonville Jaguars.*

*For more information, visit [www.e-baptisthealth.com](http://www.e-baptisthealth.com).*