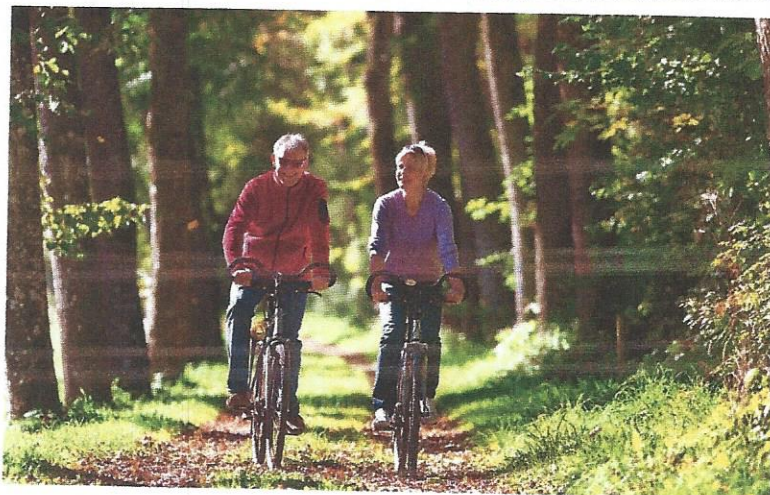


# Biking for Fitness

Safety is of primary importance for cyclists



by Jean Jeffers, Staff Writer

They say once you learn to ride a bike, you never forget how. Perhaps you were an avid bicyclist when you were a youngster. But now that you're Living Well 50 Plus, it might be a good time to dust off your two-wheeler and start cycling again.

Regular exercise in the form of biking reduces stress, say Roy Vallach and Bill Katovsky, authors of *Bike for Life: How to Ride to 100*. Cycling also relieves depression and anxiety. It is great for getting started because it is a low-impact activity that doesn't put strain on your body. Cycling improves health; it is especially good for people who need to lose weight and who have arthritis or lung problems.

Safety is of primary importance in biking. Here are the basics of bike safety:

- Be sure to check with your doctor before beginning this or any exercise.
- Wear a good-fitting helmet.
- Use a comfortable bike, fitted to your physique. Make sure the bike distributes your weight evenly over your back, butt, shoulders, arms and hands. Get a saddle that fits you well; this will cut down on chaffing and pain from sitting.
- Be sure to warm up before you ride and stretch to be as limber as possible. Cool down afterwards and stretch again.
- Wear clothes that absorb moisture; dress in layers.
- Don't overreach. Don't try to

- go too far too fast when you're first starting out. Ease into cycling and make slow progress.
  - Drink plenty of fluids when you're on a long ride. Be sure to eat a good breakfast and have a pre-ride snack. Be sure to drink enough after finishing the ride.
  - Always carry with you identification and emergency contacts.
  - Take along an extra inner tube and a few select tools.
- Most essential of all is to be

careful when you're on the road. Cyclists die at a rate far beyond their numbers. In 2002, road accidents involving bikes and riders were responsible for 662 deaths. On the road, make your bike "look like a car" by riding a little to the left rather than hugging the curb. Ride in less trafficked areas if possible. Observe and use all hand signals. Have lights on your bike and wear light colored and/or reflective clothing if you ride after dark.



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