



Horseback Riding

SafeTips from the Naval Safety Center

Quick and easy summaries to find out about something new you're doing or as a refresher for something you haven't done in a while. They're a great training tool to pass around at meetings, through e-mail, or post on bulletin boards.

- ◎ Like other activities, the equipment you should wear depends on what you're doing. A helmet and safety stirrups (so that your foot will pull out of the stirrup if you fall off) are a must, regardless of the activity.
- ◎ Wear a safety vest if you are planning on jumping or bronco riding.
- ◎ What the horse is wearing is also important. If you get up on a horse with only a halter (i.e., no saddle or bridle), you will have little control over the animal if it spooks.
- ◎ Wear a helmet. Horses have been known to get spooked and bolt—for example, if they get stung by an insect. Horses are prey animals who use speed to keep from getting eaten. When they feel threatened, they run.
- ◎ According to veteran riders, eventually everyone gets thrown. Getting up with a cracked helmet and realizing that it could have been your noggin is an excellent lesson.
- ◎ Most horses hold their breath when being saddled regardless of their temperament. To avoid a saddle slipping down, after you have placed the saddle on the horse's back, walk the horse about 50 feet and the horse will exhale. Or you can gently pull the front leg forward and the horse will release the held breath. After the horse has exhaled, retighten the girth.
- ◎ Run your hands over the horse to check for injuries. Pick up their feet and check their shoes.
- ◎ Know where you're riding and that it is appropriate for horses.
- ◎ If you're a beginner, pick the 20-year-old gelding, not the 5-year-old stallion.

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