



## **MS Melbourne Cycle - Training Tips**

*By the Cycling Promotion Fund*

The MS Melbourne Cycle is a great opportunity for the whole family to get out on their bikes and enjoy a ride through the streets of Melbourne.

### **Bike riding, good for your health!**

Riding a bicycle is an excellent way to exercise, maintain your fitness and reverse some of the effects of ageing.

#### **Riding a bicycle:**

- o Uses all the large muscle groups
- o Eases loads on joints
- o Helps prevent osteoporosis and relieve the effects of rheumatoid arthritis
- o Is a great way to improve cardiovascular fitness
- o Helps you to cope better with stress.

#### **Remember to start slowly.**

**If you are concerned see a doctor before your start.**

#### **To start with:**

- o Choose a route which is flat and smooth: a shared off-road path is a great way to start
- o Ride slowly for the first 10 minutes, gradually increasing your speed as you finish your warm up
- o As a beginner, cycle for 20 minutes and aim to cover about 5km
- o Finish off by warming down and stretching for 10 minutes
- o Slowly increase your distance and speed over time, but do not overexert yourself
- o Remember that riding three times a week is better than a once-a-week outing.

**Your confidence and comfort will grow as your muscles adjust to their new use.**

### **Select a bicycle which is right for you**

Buying a bicycle can be a challenge as there are so many different types and brands to choose from. The good news is bicycles today are much more comfortable, versatile and flexible than those from years gone by.

### **Before you buy a bicycle consider a few things:**

#### **What style of riding interests you?**

- o Leisurly riding on the local bicycle track



- Off-road exploring
- Long-distance touring
- Getting to the shop, library or bowling club
- Serious performance-oriented cycling.

**The range of bicycles available include:**

- Road bikes
- Mountain bikes
- Comfort bikes
- Folding bikes
- Power-assisted bikes.

**Accessories:**

- A helmet, which is compulsory
- A good lock
- Water bottle and cage
- Cycle computer to keep track of distance travelled and speed
- Tool kit for any unexpected punctures (with a pump)
- Lights if you travel in dull or dark conditions

A bicycle retailer is the best place to get professional advice. They will be able to tailor the bicycle to your needs and your budget.

**Be safe, comfortable and have fun**

Whatever bicycle you choose, be sure that the frame size is right for you and is adjusted for your comfort.

**Be seen**

In any light bike riders should dress to be seen, so wear bright coloured clothes and use lights in dull or dark conditions, it will make you safer and help you enjoy your ride more.

**Saddle height**

Adjust the height of the saddle by placing your heel on the pedal (at its lowest point) with your leg at full stretch. Lower the saddle until your hips/pelvis no longer sway from side-to-side as you pedal.

**Saddle position**

Adjust the saddle so that your feet are placed naturally above the pedals. Some riders prefer their saddle tilted slightly forward or backward although having the saddle positioned straight is the most common position.

**Handlebar height**

Set the height of your handlebars higher than the saddle if you prefer a more upright position. Setting them at the same height as the saddle will give you a slightly forward riding position, which some people prefer.

**Don't forget to have fun**



Cycling is a great way to get around, explore your neighbourhood, visit friends and maintain mobility. On a bicycle you can stop to have a chat, smell the scents and hear the birds sing. Plus, you don't have to worry about finding a parking spot or paying for petrol.

### **Find someone to ride with**

Riding with a friend can double the enjoyment.

Riding with a social group is a great way to make new friends and keep motivated. Ask the recreational officer at your local council if there is a regular cycling group in your area.

Many organise leisurely rides with stops on the way to recharge your batteries.

### **Hydrating in Hot Weather**

With an event date of March 25 you will be training for the ride across the hottest months. Working up a sweat is easy to do under hot conditions and it is important that the sweat lost is replaced quickly. Regular fluid replacement helps to maintain appropriate levels of hydration and ensure you can keep performing at your peak.

### **Why is dehydration a concern?**

Water makes up around 70% of the body. Blood consists predominately of water and when fluid levels in the body drop, so does the amount of blood. As the volume of blood decreases, there is less blood to deliver oxygen to the working muscles and your heart has to beat faster to maintain the same amount of work.

Sweat loss is one of the main sources of heat loss from the body. In hot conditions, you rely on sweat evaporating from your skin to keep your body cool. If you become dehydrated, there is less sweat available to cool your body and you become at risk of overheating. This can lead to dizziness, fainting and nausea and in extreme cases muscle tissue damage.

What's more, dehydration has been shown to reduce mental function and impair co-ordination - all of which will reduce your ability to ride effectively.

### **What is the best way to replace fluid losses?**

It is vital to get into the habit of drinking regularly. Thirst is a poor indicator of dehydration. Unfortunately, by the time you feel thirsty, you're already dehydrated. You have to consciously drink before you get thirsty.

The natural choice to rehydrate is water. It's cheap and readily available. However, not everyone likes the taste of water and these people often stop drinking before they are adequately hydrated.

### **Top tips for beat dehydration**

1. Drink regularly – don't wait till you're thirsty
2. Drink small amounts often. As a rough guide drink 150-200ml every 10-15 minutes
3. Cool drinks are more palatable and absorbed more quickly from the stomach than drinks at room temperature
4. Save the beer and coffee until well after the event.

Get into the habit of drinking regularly, especially during hot weather, as it is easy to become dehydrated without being aware. Good hydration will decrease your risk of suffering from heat illnesses and will help keep you performing at your peak.



### **Riding**

When riding on shared paths be prepared to slow down or stop if necessary and use your bell to alert other path users and pass on the right.

Become confident on shared pathways or quiet streets before moving into traffic. If possible remember to ride at least a metre from the kerb or parked cars, you are more visible and are able to avoid debris and broken glass. Wear bright coloured clothing to improve your visibility.

It is a good idea to learn how to use your gears properly. Being in the correct gear makes riding much easier and helps you conserve energy. Smooth gear changes reduce the chance of you losing speed. Be aware of when you are starting to slow down or speed up and need to change gears accordingly. Always change down to easier gears coming up to roundabout, traffic lights or give way signs, then if you have to stop, you won't be in your hardest gears when taking off. It's a good idea to change down when coming up to a hill, too.

### **Cooling down**

A warm down after your ride will help bring your heart rate back down and some static stretching – concentrating on your lower back and legs - can help reduce muscle tightness. It is also a good time to top up your fluid levels and replenish your fuel stores with nutrient-rich carbohydrates.

### **Riding with MS**

It is now well accepted that exercise is beneficial for people living with MS. It helps to maintain and increase your health, improve your psychological well-being and decrease some secondary complications of MS.

The key thing for people with MS is to be aware that they may become fatigued quickly therefore it is very important to pace yourself and take regular rest breaks.

Another factor to consider is the impact of heat intolerance. If the conditions are going to be very hot, it may be preferable to reduce the distance ridden. Make sure that you have a friend or family member ride with you to monitor how you are going.

## **Potential Training Rides**

### **Bayside Path**

This picturesque beachside bike path extends 23km from Beacon Cove to Ricketts Point. It can be a great day ride, or can be broken into shorter return sections to Brighton Beach (20km return) or Black Rock (30km return). For one-way public transport rides, ride the 4km from Flinders Street Station to Beacon Cove via the light rail path and catch a train back from either Brighton Beach or Sandringham. There are numerous eateries right beside the path include the Beacon Cove Food Store, St Kilda Pier Kiosk, North Road Pavilion, and of course the Ricketts Point Tea House.

### **Yarra Trail**

If bushland and river views are more your style, you can ride up the Yarra River from Flinders Street station all the way to Westerfolds Park, then along the Diamond Creek Path to Eltham. The total distance is 41km, and the ride is all off-road with only minor ups and downs. You can stop along the way at Collingwood Children's Farm, admire Dights Falls, or visit Heide Museum of Modern Art at Banksia Park. There are attractive picnic spots along this path, as well as cafes at the Fairfield Boathouse, Heide, Westerfolds Park and Eltham. For a shorter ride finish at Heidelberg, a little over half way.



**Capital City Trail**

At Dights Falls you can opt for a circuit ride of 30km and instead of continuing along the Yarra take the path along Merri Creek. This continues right out to the Ring Road, but use the underpass at Rushall Station to turn west along the old Inner Circle Rail Line through the inner northern suburbs. Nicholson and Lygon Sts both offer a good selection of cafes not too far from the trail. After crossing Flemington Bridge head downstream alongside Moonee Ponds Creek to Footscray Rd. Cross and turn left to ride past Docklands, and more tempting eateries. You can then catch a train home from Spencer St.



## 8 week beginners training program for 46km ride

Week	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total km
1		5		10		10		25
2		5		10		15		30
3		10		10		25		45
4 (Rest)		5		5		15		25
5		10		10		25		45
6		10		15		30		55
7		15		15		35		65
8 Event		10		5			46	61

**Note:** If you are only able to train once Mon-Fri and twice on weekends, do the Tuesday session on Sunday and try to do the Thursday session on Wednesday. If you are riding with children on weekends, but alone on weekdays, try to do your harder sessions when you are alone (ie. do the Saturday intensity in your Tuesday ride for weeks 1, 2 and 6.)

### Intensity

**Low** – an easy session focussing on keeping your legs spinning quickly. You should be able to chat easily.

**Moderate** – an even pace holding a higher heart rate. You will be puffing quite a bit. You can still chat, but not as comfortably.

**Moderately Hard** – solid session where it is hard to talk and you should feel quite tired at the end. These workouts are really good for improving your fitness level.

For more cycling tips and information visit: [www.cyclingpromotion.com.au](http://www.cyclingpromotion.com.au)

Many local bicycle user groups have regularly rides you may like to join. It provides a great opportunity for you to get used cycling in a group. To find a Bicycle User Group or Club near you, follow this link: [http://www.cyclingpromotion.com.au/component/option,com\\_cpf/Itemid,0/state,vic/](http://www.cyclingpromotion.com.au/component/option,com_cpf/Itemid,0/state,vic/)

***The Cycling Promotion Fund is a proud supporter of the MS Melbourne Cycle***