



## CYCLING FACT SHEET No. 41

# The importance of a good bicycle seat

One of the most important parts of a bicycle is also one of the most ignored – the saddle.

Too many cyclists are willing to put up with numbness or pain in the posterior, rather than doing something to improve their level of comfort.

Obtaining a comfortable ride is often simply a matter of correctly adjusting the height and angle of the saddle.

Occasional riders tend to have their seat too low, making it impossible for the legs to carry some of the body's weight – when your saddle is at the correct height, your legs should be almost fully extended at the bottom of each pedal stroke.

Generally, the saddle should be horizontal although, some male riders find it more comfortable to tilt the front slightly higher than the back and women riders may prefer the front slightly lower.

Factors other than the seat can also improve ride comfort such as wearing padded cycling knicks, which will help to soften the ride and prevent chafing.

A fork-based or seat post suspension system can also reduce the amount of shock transferred from the tyres to the saddle.

If you still cannot get a comfortable ride it might be time to consider buying new seat, but remember everyone is built differently so visit a good bike shop and try out as many types or styles as possible.

A correctly fitting saddle should support your weight on the "sit bones" with little or no pressure on the soft tissue in between.

Saddles designed specifically for women are generally wider and shorter than male or unisex models.



Regular cyclists who chalk up hundreds of kilometres a week can develop saddle sores and there is even some evidence that very prolonged riding can increase the likelihood of impotence in certain individuals.

The latest attempt at solving these problems is a range of Strike saddles manufactured by the Selle SMP company of Italy. Designed by a team of urologists, this new range is suitable for either gender and incorporates a geometrical central channel running the length of the seat that prevents crushing of soft tissue. The unique contours allow a continuous and completely natural flow of blood.

There are different versions available to fit racing, hybrid and mountain bikes, and each of these comes in a range of padding thickness. The Strike range is not cheap, at a retail price of around \$300, but if feedback from local cyclists who have tried the saddles is any indication, the investment seems to be well worthwhile.

***This fact sheet is one of a series dealing with the use of bicycles for recreation and transport in Western Australia. The series looks at a range of cycling-related topics including ride routes, touring tips, maintenance, safety, road rules, insurance and product reviews. You can find more cycling fact sheets online at [www.transport.wa.gov.au/cycling](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/cycling)***

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