



CYCLING FACT SHEET No. 33

Tricycles provide extra stability

Tricycles are a great alternative for people with balance problems or some form of disability preventing them from riding a standard bicycle.

There are several types of trikes available from local retailers. Most basic models have the familiar one lead wheel / two rear wheel configuration and are pedalled just like a bicycle. Power-assisted models have an electric motor that is only activated when the pedals are moving and thereby make the pedalling effort much easier than normal.

Some tricycles come equipped with lockable cargo baskets, built-in lights and a step-through frame to make it easy to get on and off.

Powered-assisted tricycles are rapidly gaining popularity among people such as seniors because they give the rider the option of using their legs for some or all of the propulsion, thereby providing valuable exercise.

While gophers or scooters are excellent for providing mobility, they rely solely on a motor and therefore require no physical input from the user. Powered-assisted trikes, on the other hand, offer a stable sitting position and give riders the option of using the motor and pedals to move the wheels.

Riding a tricycle

Anyone who has ridden an adult upright tricycle for any distance will tell you that it is quite different to riding a bicycle.

For instance, the steering on a tricycle is much more sensitive. Counter-steering (turning the handlebars slightly in the opposite direction to initiate banking) is required to maintain balance on a bicycle when cornering.

A tricycle, however, does not lean and this means that the handlebars are only ever pushed in the direction you want to go, which results in much more direct steering, meaning sharp bends or corners must be taken at a slower speed than on two wheels.

One problem with any trike is an inherent lack of stability on certain types of uneven or cambered surface, mainly because it has three wheel tracks instead of one. With experience, however, a rider quickly learns how to manoeuvre their tricycle in such a way that all but the steepest of inclines can be negotiated without dismounting.

Tricycles generally retail for more than equivalent standard bicycles because of their more complex construction and a lower production volume.

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



Bikewest
Department of Transport
441 Murray Street, Perth WA 6000
Tel: (08) 9216 8000
Fax: (08) 9216 8497
Email: cycling@transport.wa.gov.au