

Bicycle infrastructure can reduce risk of cycling injuries by half

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Certain types of routes carry much lower risk of injury for cyclists, according to a new University of British Columbia study on the eve of Vancouver's Bike to Work Week.

The study, published today in the [American Journal of Public Health](#), analyzed the cause of 690 [cycling](#) injuries in Vancouver and Toronto from 2008 to 2009 and various route types and infrastructure.

The greatest risk to cyclists occurs when they share major streets with parked cars, with no [bike lanes](#) present – like on Broadway in Vancouver or Dundas Street in Toronto. Without a designated space on the road, cyclists face a heightened risk of injury from moving cars and car doors opening, according to the study.

In contrast, infrastructure designed for cyclists – including bike lanes on major streets without parked cars, residential street bike routes, and off-street bike paths – carries about half the risk, while cycle tracks (physically separated bike lanes) carries the lowest injury risk for cyclists, at about one-tenth the risk.

"Cycle tracks and other bike-specific infrastructure are prevalent in the cycling cities of [Northern Europe](#), but have been slow to catch on in North America," says Kay Teschke, a professor in UBC's School of Population and Public Health and lead author of the study. "Adoption of safer route infrastructure would prevent crashes from occurring in the first place, while encouraging cycling. Since cycling offers major health

benefits, this is a win-win."

Teschke says that increased injury risk also exists with streetcar or train tracks, and where there is construction. "There is renewed interest in streetcars for [urban transportation](#), and the associated tracks were found to be particularly hazardous for cyclists," she adds. "There is also higher risk when construction impacts road traffic. Safe detours for [cyclists](#) need to be provided."

Provided by University of British Columbia

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