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## Get comfortable on your saddle

When it comes to being comfortable on your bike, your saddle (seat) is very important. Ride on the wrong saddle, or with your saddle at the wrong height or angle, and the repercussions can be very painful: stories of chaffing and numbness abound.

With the introduction of new types of saddles and the hype surrounding “ergonomic” saddles, selecting one may be a bit confusing. Don’t let the hype fool you though, the setup of the saddle is just as important as the saddle itself. Your bike shop should be able to help you choose a saddle and set it up correctly.

### Saddle setup

The most important thing is height. When your saddle is at the correct height, your legs should be **almost** fully extended at the bottom of the pedal stroke.

Your saddle should be horizontal, or almost horizontal. If in doubt use a spirit level to check.

Saddles can also be adjusted forwards or backwards (using the rails under the seat).

### Saddle shape and type

Since everyone’s bottom is a different shape (and size), saddles are a very personal choice. Finding a saddle that ‘fits’ is often a matter of trial and error. The best way to find out if a saddle suits you is to sit on it! If in doubt, ask to try the saddle on the bike for an extended test ride. Some bike shops offer seven-day saddle testing.

A correctly fitting saddle supports your weight on your ‘sit’ bones with little pressure on the soft tissue in between. Women’s saddles tend to be wider and shorter to fit women’s (generally) wider pelvises. Men’s saddles tend to be narrower and longer. But some men are more comfortable on a woman’s saddle and vice versa.

Many saddles have cut-outs and holes in the middle of the saddle or use softer material. These are all designed to reduce pressure on the ‘softer tissues’. If you find these saddles more comfortable, use them. If not, don’t worry.

If you are concerned about damage to the nether regions there are all types of saddles designs available. Some recumbent bicycles even have ‘chairs’ to sit in instead of saddles.

### Numbness and chaffing

Numbness in the nether regions can be disconcerting. Sometimes numbness can be caused by a longer than normal ride and will go away after a few hours. Check the saddle adjustments: height, angle and fore-aft position. If you experience severe pain or blood in your urine, or if the numbness persists for more than 24 hours after a ride, see your doctor.

A correctly fitted saddle will help prevent chaffing but clothing is also important. Wear something that does not rub against you while pedalling. Cycling knicks worn next to the skin are ideal.