

## Senior Cycling

A recent *Outside* online article reported that in 2019, 80-year-old American track cyclist Patricia Baker established four national and world records in the 80–84 age group and went on to win both a gold and silver medal at the UCI (Union Cycliste Internationale) Masters Track Cycling World Championships in Manchester, England.

While most senior cyclists probably don't aspire to winning competitive world records, they are likely aware of the many physical and mental benefits of regular riding. A recent study revealed that cycling four miles a day can reduce coronary risk by 50 percent. Another British study in *Aging Cell* found that some long distance cyclists in their 80s had the immune system of 20-year-olds.

Since the immune system declines by approximately 2–3 percent a year from our 20s, people in their 60s, 70s, and 80s are more vulnerable to infections, arthritis, heart disease, and cancer. Cycling for seniors adds protection against all of these issues. A study of fit amateur cyclists in the age range of 55 to 79 found many were physically much younger than most people their age. This youth factor could be seen from the stronger condition of their heart, lungs, and muscles.

Muscle atrophy or loss (sarcopenia) is inevitable with aging and averages 3–8 percent per decade after 30 and accelerates after the age of 60. But cycling can minimize the rate of loss,

especially when coupled with resistance/weight training several times a week and adequate dietary protein.

Staying active by cycling increases oxygen flow to the brain and improves mental function. Even on short rides interspersed throughout the day, strength and balance are also improved by this low impact and highly aerobic form of exercise. It's important for older riders to pedal with their knees straight in smooth concentric circles to avoid increased stress on knee caps and cartilage.

Bicycling is not only fun but it is generally safe and easy on seniors. It offers the benefits of increased muscle strength, improved heart health, and heightened mental alertness without wearing down the body.

*Jim Dodson is an experienced bicycle accident lawyer, cyclist and bicycle safety advocate who has been representing accident victims for over 25 years. Although his primary office is in Clearwater, he represents injury victims throughout Florida. He is the author of the [Florida Bicycle Accident Handbook](#) which answers the most commonly asked questions by injured cyclists. If you have questions about a Florida cycling accident this valuable resource is available to you absolutely free of charge at [www.jimdodsonlaw.com](http://www.jimdodsonlaw.com).*

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