

ASK THE BIKE FITTER

Q: Why do I need a bike fit?

A: Bottom line, to make the cycling experience as enjoyable and safe as possible. A bike shops job is to sell you a bicycle that is sized for you. A bike fitter will make the bike fit you. A bicycle is a symmetric machine; a human is an asymmetric machine. Therein lies the problem – forcing an asymmetric machine to conform to a symmetric machine. A bike fitter will ensure that the bike fits you, not the other way around. A good bike fitter will take an in-depth look at your body in its natural and relaxed state and adjust your cleats, seatpost, saddle and cockpit so that you stay in that relaxed and injury free state while cycling.

Q: What is the most common fit problem you see in cycling?

A: There are actually several. The #1 problem by far is bad cleat alignment. You can clearly see this by the cyclist that has their knees going way out to the side at the top of the pedal stroke. Not only is this inefficient, but is damaging to the knees. When the knees go out to the sides, you are not only overstretching the Lateral collateral ligament but also putting extra pressure on the Lateral condyle and Lateral meniscus which will only cause knee pain later in life. A good bike fitter can have your knees going straight up and down during the first visit. The #2 problem is saddle height. Most cyclists are either too high or too low in the saddle. The third problem I see is the handlebars are too low. This causes overstretching of the hamstrings which not only robs a lot of power but also causes a sore low back. Correctly fit, you should not have lower back pain. Again, a good bike fitter can fix all of these items.

Q: How do you know getting a bike fit helps the cyclist.

A: Several ways. #1, feedback from clients who say that they never were able to ride so well until after a bike fit. #2, feedback from clients who say that this was the first time they have been able to ride pain free. #3, from competitive triathletes who write to say that after the bike fit, they set a personal best at an Ironman event. #4, Without them knowing it, I measure their power before and after the bike fit where I see 10-30 watts increase post bike fit.