

MELON DROP INSTRUCTIONS

This captivating demonstration helps your audience think about the fragility of the human brain and skull and the importance of preventing head trauma through the proper use of a helmet in recreational activities such as cycling. This activity is a great lead into a helmet fitting demonstration. Please note the melon drop is best done in a large auditorium or outside and can be messy!

Supplies:

- Ripe honeydew melons (these offer the best helmet fit and their smooth surface are easy to draw faces on). To check for ripeness, shake the melons and listen for the seeds inside; the outer rind should be slightly soft to the touch.
- Markers or paint to create the melon's facial expressions. Melons that are to be dropped without helmets should look alarmed; melons dropped wearing helmets should look happy.
- Helmets – one for the presenter, one for the melon (*use a rounded toddler helmet for the melon and pad the inside with extra soft padding. The helmet won't ever fit a melon perfectly and this padding just helps ensure a better, more snug fit).
- Ladder
- Supplies for post-activity clean up

Objective:

The objective here is to observe the effects of a melon dropped at high velocity with and without a helmet. Draw parallels between the melon and the human head and have kids imagine the drop being equivalent to a bicycle crash at moderate speed.

Directions:

- Introduce students to both the alarmed and happy melons: the alarmed melon is about to take a fall without a helmet; the happy melon will fall too, but his head will be protected by a helmet. If appropriate ask students about what will happen to each melon on impact.
- The presenter should put on his or her helmet before climbing up the ladder.
- As the presenter heads up the ladder explain the importance of helmets; this dialogue should distract students from the presenter who will give the melon a good squeeze/push at the back which ensures the melon will *SPLAT* on impact.
- Have students countdown and then drop the melon.
- As the presenter comes down from the ladder and examines the smashed melon, he or she should explain that the best neurosurgeons can't put this head back together.
- Strap the happy melon into its helmet and start up the ladder again.
- Have students countdown again; when ready to drop ensure the helmeted melon is dropped gently straight down.



Don't forget to clean up the mess after the presentation. And Have Fun!