Q&A

Your technical, health and legal queries answered by Cycle's experts

Q I recently had a full knee replacement. What are the chances of being able to return to cycling as I did in the past, when I would do 20-40 mile bike rides, including some decent climbs. Can I expect a full recovery or will I have to accept some form of compromise?
James Nicholson

You are asking the right person, James, as I had a new hip last year and am happily back to riding 100km audaxes. The answer, as you might expect, is: "It depends!"

Assuming you are otherwise healthy and didn't lose too much strength while waiting for surgery, you should be able to build up your fitness again quite quickly. If your operation has been a success and you have made a good recovery, you should be in less pain and have better function than you did before surgery.

Following the guidance of your post-operative team, and gradually increasing your activity levels, you should be able to get on your bike again by around the 12 weeks mark. (You need to be able to bend the knee past 90 degrees to pedal unless you have, for example, a swing crank; see highpath.co.uk.)

If you have had complications after surgery or have other health issues, you'll need to be more careful. Try a static bike or an e-bike as a stepping stone to road cycling. Working on muscle strength off the bike will also help.

Take it steadily and don't overdo the distance or the steepness at first. But there is no reason why you shouldn't be back to hill climbs and enjoying your rides again soon.
Dr Kate Brodie

Q The rivets that attached my bike's mudguard stay have broken off. It's the bracket underneath the front mudguard. Can you suggest a better solution than tape?
Jim77, on the Cycling UK Forum

A pair of suitably-sized pop rivets inserted from underneath the guard, with washers under their heads to spread the load, will do the job nicely.
Richard Hallett

Q I was fitting a new tyre but was unable to reuse the tube as the valve was blocked with sealant. I tried to remove the valve core but couldn't so I used a new tube. Any suggestions for removing the stuck valve?
cooper_coleraine, on the Cycling UK Forum

Get medieval on the valve core with a pair of pliers or tiny spanner. Check beforehand that the valve has a removable core, then find a way to hold the stem while so doing. Hold it in a vice; the thread on a threaded valve stem is expendable as the thin stem nut serves no useful purpose if you're using innertubes.
Richard Hallett

Q Can cracks develop on a rear titanium stay adjacent to the rear wheel skewer clamp due to excessive over-tightening of it? I'd done less than 200km when I saw it.
Robert Bialek

This needs a picture. Has the frame done 200km from new? Is there definitely a crack or cracks? If so, is it in the rear end, next to the skewer, or in the stay itself? The last is unlikely; titanium can crack if inexpertly manipulated or poorly prepared for welding but any such defect would likely take longer than 200km to develop. A crack might form in the stay if it has been worked, perhaps to make a tyre-clearance indent.

While cast or machined dropouts can be vulnerable to abuse, a robust plate-style dropout is unlikely to crack due to over-tightening of the skewer – although if the dropout is misaligned it will be pulled temporarily into alignment by the skewer's clamping force, setting up potentially damaging stress. If you're worried, get the frame checked by a professional.
Richard Hallett

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