



Athena's Adventures in Health Policy

THIS IS HOW I STAY SAFE

FOR AGES
8-12



By Ana Rita Gonzalez and Myrna Burgos

Illustrated by Melina Sugliano

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CHAPTER 1: BIKING TO SCHOOL

Some kids dreaded the beginning of the school year. Athena was not one of them.

She'd been waiting for the start of fourth grade all summer, excited to meet her new teacher, learn new things, and see her friends every weekday. Plus, this year, for the first time, her parents were going to let her ride her bike to school. Athena had been riding all over the neighborhood for months, but now, she would be allowed to ride on the road. The thought alone made her squeal with excitement.

No more carpool line. No more school buses crammed full of noisy kids. This was Athena's year.

Of course, she wouldn't be riding her bike alone. Her brother, Odin, would be biking to school, too. But Odin was moving into sixth grade at the middle school, so their destinations would be different. Athena felt as if she'd been released from the confines of childhood. This was freedom! And independence! And—

“You’re going to need new safety gear,” Mama said at breakfast. School would be back in session in a week, which felt like ages. Athena had all her new supplies ready—notebooks, pencils, erasers, folders, and a new backpack—but safety gear? What did that mean?

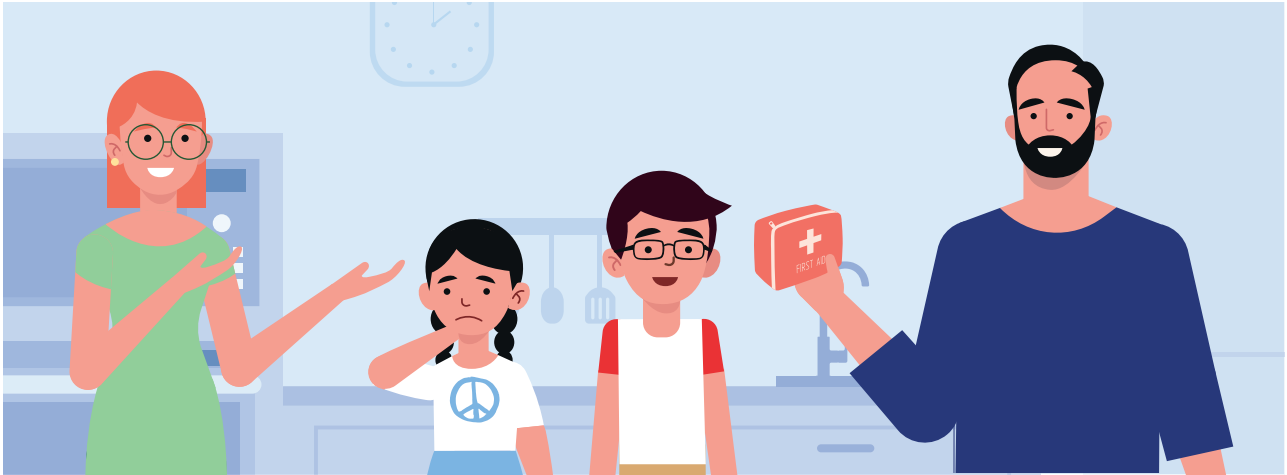
“Yeah, I think my helmet is getting a little tight,” said Odin. He was fiddling with the settings on his new phone. Papa said it was for emergencies only, but Athena still felt a bit jealous. Having an older sibling was hard sometimes. Odin got to try everything first.



Athena pulled her eyes back to her plate of eggs and toast. “My helmet is fine,” she said. She didn’t know if that was true, but her helmet didn’t bother her when she wore it yesterday. It had taken forever to find one she liked—purple and blue and covered in sparkles—and she did not want to go through that again.

“That’s good,” said Mama, bringing Athena back to the present, “but I still want you to have wrist wraps, elbow pads, and knee pads.”

Wraps and pads? Was Athena supposed to show up for her first day of fourth grade looking like a mummy? There was no way she was going to wear *wrist wraps, elbow pads, and knee pads*.



But it was best not to argue with Mama—not this early in the morning. Athena nodded quietly and listened as Papa taught Odin how to place a call on his new phone.

“This is the number you’ll dial in case there’s an emergency on the way to school,” Papa was saying. “I also put a first aid kit in your backpack for minor cuts and scrapes. Remember to wash them before applying bandages, yes?”

“I will,” said Odin. He sounded very responsible. Athena wondered if she could be responsible without dressing like a mummy. She hoped so. Otherwise, she was going to be too embarrassed to leave her driveway.

“We’ll go to the sporting goods store this afternoon to try on some safety gear,” Mama said—and that was the final straw.

“I’m going to ride so carefully that it won’t matter what I’m wearing,” Athena argued. She had to put a stop to this nonsense before her classmates laughed at her *wraps and pads*.

“I appreciate that, Athena, but it’s my job to keep you safe,” Mama replied as she carried her breakfast dishes to the sink. “If you want to ride your bike to school, you’ll need the appropriate gear.”

Appropriate gear. Athena had been riding her bike all summer with only a helmet—and sometimes *without* a helmet. What was so different about riding on the road? Finally, she took a deep breath and tried a diplomatic approach. She asked, “Why is this so important, Mama?”

“It’s a health policy,” Mama replied, smiling. “Do you remember what that means?”

Athena did remember. Her parents had been teaching her about health policies since she was a little girl. “A health policy is like an instruction from a parent or teacher,” she said. “Even if we don’t like them, they keep us safe and healthy.”

“That’s right,” said Mama. “Our government leaders come together to create policies that protect us in our daily lives.”

“But how can safety gear be a health policy?” Athena asked. “It’s like...” She paused to think. “It’s like fancy clothing.” *Except it’s funny-looking*, she thought.

“Safety gear plays an important role in injury prevention,” Mama replied. She passed the kitchen sponge to Papa so he could wipe down the

countertops. Then, she continued, “Would you agree that it’s important that you show up for school uninjured and ready to learn?”

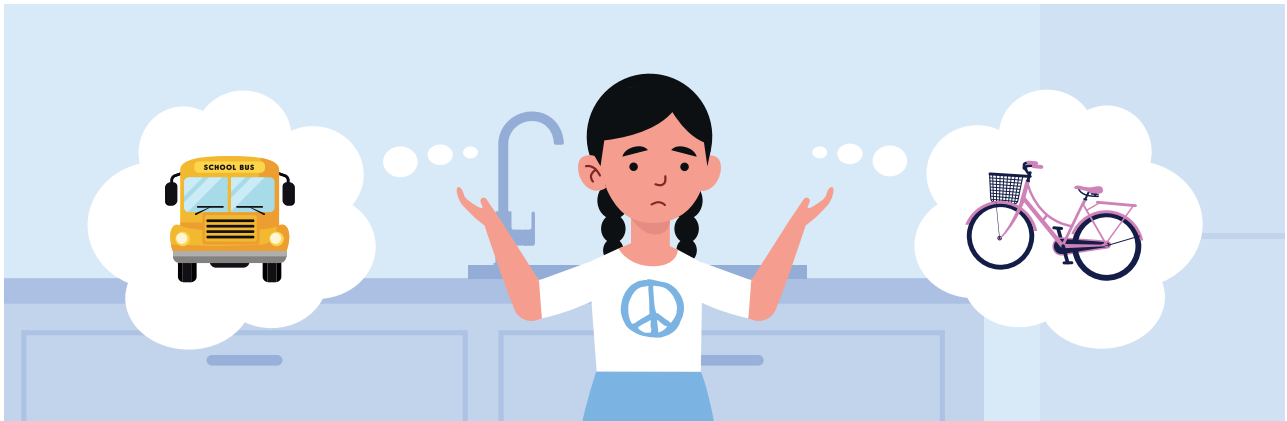
Athena sighed; Mama had a point. “Yes,” she grumbled.

“The government thinks so, too,” said Papa. “That’s why safety gear is a health policy.”

“It’s kind of like driving a car,” Odin said thoughtfully. “Cars have airbags, and we’ll have wraps and pads.”

Athena rolled her eyes. She hated it when Odin pretended to be a grown-up.

But Mama only said, “Exactly. And just like when driving a car, there are policies to keep us safe.”



Road safety policies? Biking to school really was a big responsibility. For a moment, Athena considered backing out. Forget independence—she would rather take the bus!

But... she’d been waiting for this opportunity all summer. She couldn’t let it slip away now. Not when she was this close.

Again, Athena sighed. As she carried her own dishes to the sink, she asked, “What are the road safety policies for bikes?”

Mama smiled. “Well, one of the most important policies is about crossing the street. It’s always best to walk next to your bike through the crosswalk, rather than riding it.”

“But why?”

“It gives you a moment to pause and look around,” Mama replied. “If you’re biking quickly through an intersection, you might not notice oncoming cars or even other people in the crosswalk. It’s safer for everyone if you wait for the walking sign and then push your bike across the street.”

That made sense. Athena loaded the dishwasher and gave a final sigh, this one of determination. When school started the following week, she would ride her bike all the way there and back—even if she had to wear *wraps and pads*.

Policies were policies—and she’d never ignored them before.

CHAPTER 2:
SHOPPING FOR SAFETY
GEAR

That afternoon, as promised, Mama took Athena and Odin to the sporting goods store to try on the necessary safety gear. Athena had been hoping she would forget. No such luck.

Odin immediately ran for the helmets and tested them to see which one fit him best. Athena moped at Mama's side, her fingers entwined in the plastic bars of their shopping cart. Maybe, if she was quiet enough, Mama would simply forget that Athena was there. But again—no such luck.

“Athena, let's go find the wrist wraps,” Mama said, and she started down the aisle next to the helmets. There was nothing Athena could do except follow her.

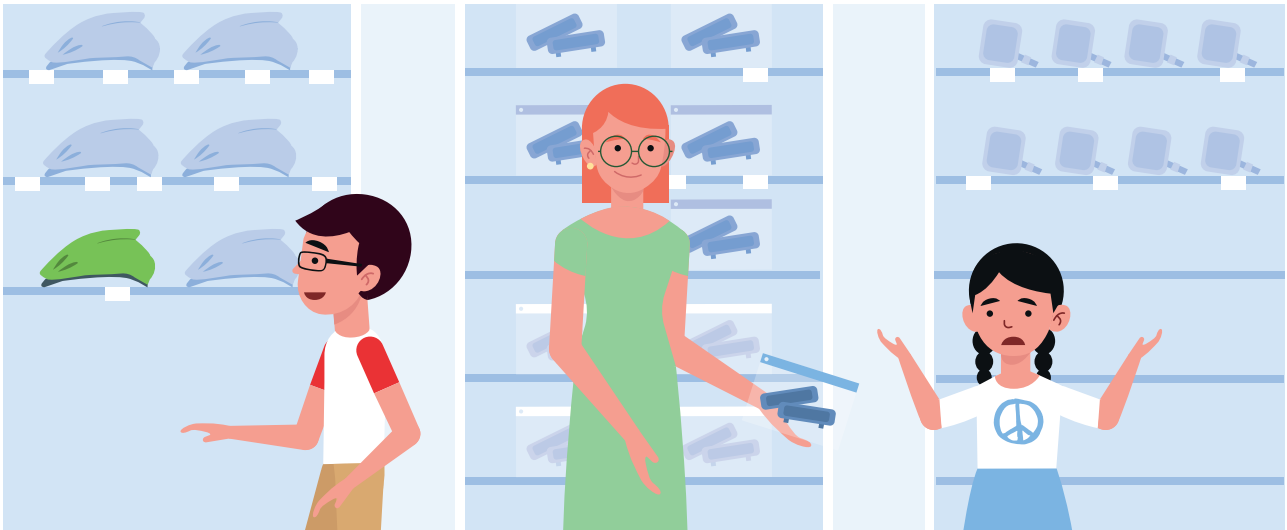
Just as Odin came barreling down the aisle with a sleek green helmet under his arm, Mama said, “Aha!” and reached for a package of white wrist wraps. Athena took one look at them and groaned. She was going to look like she had two broken arms!

“These will fit you, Athena,” Mama said, handing her the package. “And Odin, these ones will fit you.” She handed a second, larger package to him.

“Are there any purple ones?” Athena asked. If she had to wear wraps, she wanted them to be a nice color.

“No, but there are blue ones,” Mama replied, handing her a different package. “Are those better?”

“Yes,” Athena mumbled. They were better—barely. “How are these going to help us anyway?”



“Wrist wraps provide extra support to prevent injury,” said Mama. “Plus, if you fall, you won’t scratch your hands.”

Athena rolled her eyes. She hadn’t fallen off her bike in years. She certainly wasn’t going to crash on the way to school—but she kept these thoughts to herself.

“What’s next?” Odin asked.

“Elbow and knee pads,” Mama replied. “Do you see them anywhere?”

“They’re back by the helmets,” Odin replied and led the way. Athena felt like she was climbing a mountain; every step she took was heavy and slow. The sporting goods store was her new least favorite place in the world.

When she saw the elbow and knee pads, her heart sank—maybe all the way into her stomach. She stood still as Mama helped her strap on a few different sizes, but they all felt the same to Athena. Bulky, scratchy, and



uncomfortable. She didn’t dare glance in the mirror at the end of the aisle. If she did, she might run out of the store. She knew she looked ridiculous.

But Mama wasn’t asking for Athena’s opinion. She was looking for pads. She chose the ones that fit Athena and Odin best, then brought everything to the checkout counter.

“Looks like you two will be biking to school,” said the cashier.

Athena tried to smile at her but fell short of true happiness. And to think she had been looking forward to this all summer! Could no one see that she would be fine without new safety gear?

Odin said something to the cashier that Athena didn't catch. She was deep in thought.

There was nothing she could do about Mama's insistence on buying wraps and pads. But Mama couldn't make her wear them to school. Once Athena left the driveway, how would her parents know if she took her safety gear off? Odin could be bossy, but he wasn't a snitch—he'd never tell. And neither would her friends.

Athena smiled. Finally, she had a plan. Health policies like recycling were important, but injury prevention was just... different. She would be careful on the road, and that's all that mattered.

Yes, she thought. *I'll just ride cautiously.* And as long as she did, she could take off her safety gear, and her parents and teacher would never know.



Back at home, Athena and Odin practiced riding their bicycles around the neighborhood, wearing their new wraps and pads. Athena felt like the neighbors were watching her and laughing. But if she could suffer through the next week, she reminded herself, it would all be worth it. Once she was on the road, away from her parents' watchful eyes, she would be free.

If only the knee and elbow pads weren't so uncomfortable! More than once, Athena stopped on the sidewalk so Odin could adjust them. At first, they were too tight, then too loose, then too tight again.

Because they're awful, Athena thought.

"Just try to forget you're wearing them," said Odin. "That's what I'm doing, and mine aren't bothering me at all."



Athena groaned. Odin couldn't possibly understand. He looked fine in his new helmet, wraps, and pads, but she looked like a blue marshmallow. Not that she had seen herself in any mirrors—she just knew.

"So what if we scrape our elbows and knees?" Athena said irritably.

"That's what your first aid kit is for, isn't it?"

"Sure," Odin said, "but a first aid kit won't help much if you break something. I'd have to call an ambulance. Is that what you want?"

Ugh—he was so paranoid! "No," Athena said calmly.



“Okay, then. Try to forget about the pads. Biking to school is supposed to be fun.”

Yes, it was supposed to be fun, something that was severely limited by the presence of safety gear. It was a good thing Athena’s new backpack was huge; she was going to need a lot of space to hide the wraps and pads.

“Come on,” Odin called. “Let’s do another lap around the neighborhood!”

Athena took a deep breath and pedaled as fast as she could to keep up. Only a week until the start of school. She could make it.

CHAPTER 3: NO PADS

On the first day of school, Athena leapt out of bed to shower and eat breakfast. She checked and double-checked her backpack to make sure she hadn't forgotten anything, then grabbed her lunch box from the fridge. She even tried to stand still during Papa's annual back-to-school photoshoot. Odin, Athena, and their little sister Rae all lined up on the front porch and made funny faces at the camera. And before they knew it, it was time to leave.

"Ride safely!" Mama called as Athena and Odin biked out of the driveway. They both wore their helmets, wrist wraps, elbow pads, and knee pads, just as they were supposed to do. Athena blew kisses to her parents and Rae as she rode toward the end of the street.

And then, once she lost sight of her house, Athena braked and stepped off her bike.



“What are you doing?” Odin asked as his bike came to a screeching halt.

“We don’t want to be late on our first day!”

“Relax,” Athena told him as she removed her wrist wraps. “We’re not going to be late.”

“Athena, why are you taking those off?” Odin asked. “They’re to keep you safe, remember?”

Athena pretended not to hear him. She stuffed the wrist wraps into her backpack and moved on to her elbow pads. She wasn’t sure there was enough room for them in her backpack—ugh!

“We’re not going anywhere until you put those back on,” Odin said firmly.

“You can stay here if you want,” Athena replied, cramming one of her knee pads into the front pocket of her bag. “I’m going to school!”

“But what if you fall? You’re going to get hurt!”

“No,” she said, barely squeezing her final pad into a side pocket. “I’m not.” She zipped up her backpack and squealed triumphantly. She felt so much better already; this was the best idea she’d ever had.

“I think you’re being irresponsible,” said Odin. It was just like him to *parent* her when she was making an important choice.

But all Athena said was, “You’re going to make us late.” Cautiously, she got back on her bicycle and pedaled toward school. After a few moments, she heard Odin riding behind her and smiled.

She *knew* this would work.



Biking to school would take Athena and Odin about fifteen minutes—they had timed it the week before. Most of their route had a bike lane for them to use, except Oak Street, where they had to ride on the sidewalk. Papa warned them to be careful of pedestrians, so Athena kept a lookout.

Riding without her wraps and pads was liberating. What a terrible week of practicing with them! She looked around at the houses on Oak Street and smiled, knowing that if anyone saw her, they wouldn’t laugh. They might even be jealous; some kids still had to take the bus.

As she rounded a bend in the road, Athena spotted a fallen tree branch in the middle of the sidewalk. She screamed and reached for the brake, but it was too late. She crashed at full speed into the tree branch and toppled to the ground.

Tears patted her cheeks as Athena sat up. She could hear Odin speaking to her but couldn’t make out the words. Time seemed to slow as she took of her injuries: a scraped elbow and two scraped knees. Her wounds were



dirty and bleeding, but she felt strangely relieved. They could be *much* worse. Odin’s first aid kit could handle a few scrapes.

Confident that she was all right, Athena attempted to push herself off the sidewalk—then cried out in pain. Something was wrong with her right wrist, something worse than a scrape.

“Athena, talk to me,” Odin demanded, crouching in front of her.

“What hurts?”

“It’s my wrist,” she said through her tears. “I think it might be broken.”

Odin slapped a hand over his forehead in distress. “I knew it. I knew this would happen.”

“Can I have some bandages?” she asked. She knew Odin was upset with her, but that didn’t change the fact that she needed help.

“Of course,” he said. Quickly, he took his water bottle out of his backpack and rinsed Athena’s scrapes. Then, he took the largest bandages he could

find and stuck them to her elbow and knees. Athena almost laughed, even though she felt terrible. At least she could've taken off her wraps and pads when she got to school. Now, she was covered in giant bandages.

“Are you sure your wrist is broken?” Odin asked.

“No,” said Athena—she'd never broken a bone before. “It'll probably feel better later.”

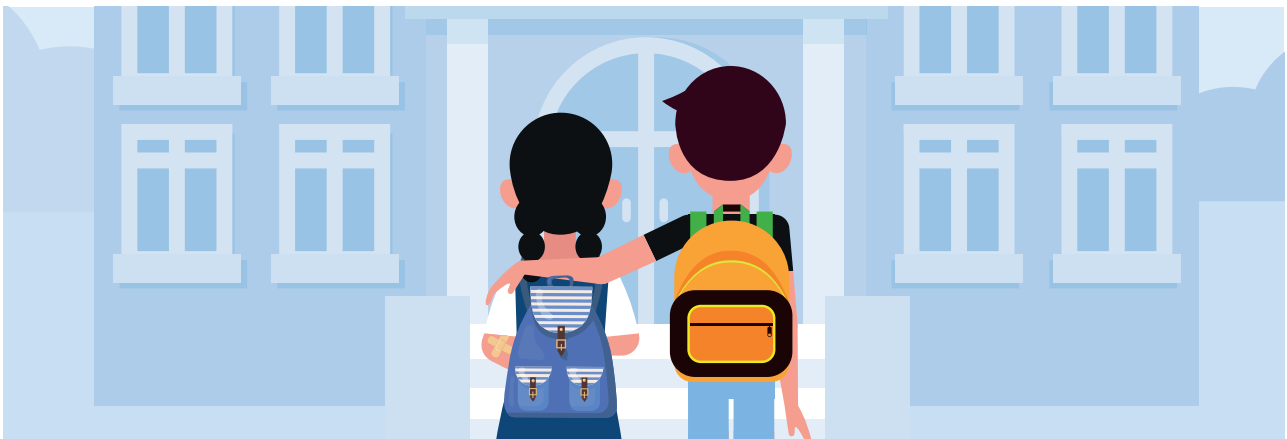
“Do you think you can ride the rest of the way to school?”

She cringed. “Definitely not.”

“Okay. We'll walk then.”

And they did. Athena and Odin arrived at the elementary school ten minutes late, and by then, her wrist was in a lot of pain. She tried to ignore it with little success. Athena was right-handed—how would she hold her pencil steady during class?

“I'm taking you to the nurse's office,” said Odin as they put their bikes in the rack outside the school. “She'll be able to tell you if your wrist is broken.”



Athena sighed. This was not what she had planned for her first day of fourth grade.

At the front desk, the school administrator greeted Odin and Athena with a smile. “You’ll need a late pass, Athena,” he said, reaching for a pen.

“Actually, she needs to see the nurse,” Odin told the administrator. “Athena fell off her bike on the way here.”

The administrator frowned with concern. “Oh, I’m so sorry to hear that. I’ll take you back to the nurse.”

Odin gave Athena a quick hug goodbye and ran to retrieve his bike; he still had to ride to the middle school next door. Athena felt the bravery drain out of her as he left the building. What if her wrist really was broken? She’d have to go to the hospital and miss the entire first day of school.

She looked sadly at her backpack, where her safety gear was still stowed. She desperately wished she hadn’t taken it off.





Athena followed the administrator to the nurse's office, empty except for the nurse herself. She gave Athena a cup of water, then carefully examined her wrist. After a moment, the nurse said, "I think it's fractured, honey. I'll give your parents a call and get you an ambulance."

An ambulance?! Overwhelmed, Athena said, "No, that's okay, I'll be fine. Can you remind me where Ms. Jada's classroom is? I'll just go there." She did not want her parents to find out that she'd ignored their warnings.

"I'm concerned about your wrist," the nurse repeated as she dialed Papa's phone number. "Your parents will meet you in the emergency room, all right? The folks there will get you patched up in no time."

Athena nodded, resigned to her fate. Her wrist ached terribly, and her stomach was in knots.

This was shaping up to be the worst day of her life.

CHAPTER 4:
INJURIES AND
CONSEQUENCES

During the ambulance ride to the hospital, all Athena could think was that her mother was never going to forgive her.

All her life, she had been learning about health policies. She knew injury prevention was important, yet she refused to wear the safety gear that would have protected her. Mama was certainly going to remind her of this fact as soon as they met in the emergency room.

Meanwhile, the sirens were loud, and three paramedics were speaking to her, asking her all sorts of questions about her accident. Athena hardly said a word. The sooner this experience was over, the better.

Sure enough, Athena's parents met her in the emergency room. But contrary to her predictions, no one asked her about her safety gear. Instead, they hugged her tightly and asked to speak with the family physician. Relieved, Athena burst into tears. *I have got to stop crying*, she thought—but it didn't work. She wanted a nap and a snack and something to take the pain out of her wrist.

This day just went on and on.



At last, Athena and her parents were led to a different, smaller hospital room, and Dr. Diego entered. Athena had known him since she was a little girl and was thankful to see his smiling face.

“Well, well, well,” he said, humor in his tone. “I heard the road scraped you up pretty good.”

Athena felt herself smile. “It was the sidewalk actually.”

“My mistake.” Dr. Diego sat down on a chair in front of her and took her wrist in his hands. As he examined her injury, he noted, “Those are some awfully large bandages. Were you wearing pads?”

Athena’s eyes drifted to her parents, who seemed to see Odin’s first aid supplies on her elbow and knees for the first time. There was no sense in lying now. “No,” she said quietly, “I wasn’t.”

“Any particular reason why?”

She sighed. There was a reason, of course, but she didn’t want to tell him about it. “Not really,” she said.

Finally, Mama spoke. “You were wearing pads and wraps when you left the house this morning. What happened, Athena?”

She looked down at her wrist, still in Dr. Diego’s hands. She looked up at her parents, who were both frowning at her. Finally, her gaze settled on the window to her right. “I took them off,” she admitted. “I thought my friends would laugh at me for wearing them because I looked ridiculous. Then, there was a giant tree branch in the middle of the sidewalk, and I crashed.” She groaned. “Is it broken, Dr. D?”

“Hold on,” Mama said. “You thought your friends would laugh at you? For being safe?”

Athena’s head felt like it was going to explode. “Mama, I looked like a blue marshmallow!”

Dr. Diego laughed, exactly as Athena expected her classmates to do.

“See?” she cried. “Dr. D didn’t even see me, and he knows I looked funny!”

“That’s not why I’m laughing,” said the doctor. “Maybe you did look strange—I’ll never know—but I’m pretty sure you didn’t look like a marshmallow.”



Athena sighed as Papa interjected, “This was so irresponsible, Athena. Can you see that?”

She *could* see it—and feel it. At length, Dr. Diego told her, “I think it’s fractured, but we’ll get an x-ray to be sure. Come with me, okay?” He helped her off the exam table and led her to a different room.

Athena sat very still during the x-ray, hoping against hope that the damage was minimal and that she could go back to school. After a brief and silent wait with her parents, Dr. Diego showed them the imaging results. There was no mistaking it.



“You fractured your wrist,” the doctor announced, pointing to a specific spot on the image. “See this? It’s your *distal radius*, and it shouldn’t look like that.” He turned to Athena and frowned. “I’m going to give you a splint for the next five weeks. Do I have your word that you’ll wear your safety gear from now on?”

Athena's anger flared. Would wrist wraps really have prevented this hospital visit? She didn't know. Maybe in the future, she would do whatever she could to avoid bicycle injuries—but she couldn't say that to Dr. Diego. It would be admitting defeat!

"I looked ridiculous," she said again.

The doctor shrugged. "Then you and I will likely be seeing a lot of each other, Athena." He turned off the image of her broken wrist, told Mama and Papa that he would be right back, and left the room.

Tears were already welling in Athena's eyes when Mama said, "Sweetheart, if you're so concerned about the way your safety gear looks, we'll drive you to school, or you can take the bus."

But Athena wasn't worried about her looks anymore. She hated that she'd put herself in danger, that she'd made Odin late for school, and that she was in the hospital, disappointing three of the most important adults in her life. She could pretend to be fine, or she could apologize. And she knew only one of those things was going to make her feel better.

"I'm so sorry," Athena said, meeting her parents' eyes. "I thought that if I rode safely, I wouldn't need the new gear. I was wrong."

Mama smiled, but her eyes were sad. "We have injury prevention policies for a reason, Athena," she said. "For one thing, they keep us out of the emergency room."

"I know that now," Athena whispered.

"Did Odin take his safety gear off, too?" Papa asked.

"No, but he did try to convince me to put mine back on."

Papa nodded. "Good. Did he clean your elbow and knees?"

"Yes."

But even so, once Dr. Diego was finished putting Athena's wrist in a splint, he examined her other wounds and applied new bandages. "Are you sure you don't want to give your pads another chance?" He raised an eyebrow at her.

Athena sighed. "I'll wear them from now on."

"Promise?"

"Promise."

"Go home and get some rest," said Dr. Diego. "You'll be able to start fourth grade in a couple of days."



By the time Athena and her parents left the hospital, she was both exhausted and famished. They stopped for fruit smoothies on the way home, but Athena only drank half of hers before she fell asleep.

When she woke up, she was lying in bed. The sun was low in the sky, and she could smell dinner cooking in the kitchen below. Cautiously, she pushed her covers to one side and went downstairs.

"Hi, sleepyhead," said Mama. She had spaghetti sauce on the front of her apron. "How are you feeling?"



“Okay,” said Athena. She was still tired and already felt hungry again. She hoped Mama was making her famous meatballs.

“Papa had an idea while you were napping,” Mama said. “He’s outside raking leaves if you’d like to talk with him about it. Athena was moving toward the front door when Odin and Rae came running inside.

“Are you okay?” Rae asked, taking in Athena’s splint.

“I’m fine,” she said, giving Rae a hug. “Odin helped me.” She smiled at him, and he smiled back.

“Papa and I picked up your bike from school,” Odin told her. “We thought you’d want it in a couple of months.”

“Thanks,” Athena replied. “That was nice of you.” Odin gave her a hug, and then she went outside to meet Papa.

He was wearing earbuds, probably listening to music, as he usually did when he cleaned up the yard. Athena tapped him on the shoulder.

“Hey,” he said, pulling out the earbuds. “How are you?”

“Okay,” she said again. “Mama told me you had an idea while I was sleeping.”

“That I did.” He set down his rake and wiped his brow. “I saw the tree branch you mentioned when I went to pick up your bike. It’s quite large, isn’t it?”

“It’s huge,” she agreed.

“Right. So, I think you and your classmates should write a letter to the mayor about removing the tree branch.”

Athena perked up. “Can we really do that?”

“Of course,” said Papa. “You can tell him about your accident and request that the branch be removed according to local policies. It’s an excellent opportunity to participate in government.”

Athena smiled. “Okay. I’ll ask Ms. Jada about it when I go to school in a couple of days.” She couldn’t wait.

The front door swung open again, and Odin called, “Dinnertime!”

Athena and Papa hurried inside for spaghetti. To Athena’s delight, Mama had, in fact, made her famous meatballs.



CHAPTER 5:
A LETTER TO THE MAYOR

On the third day of school, Athena made her first appearance in class. Her friends surrounded her, asking about her accident and her splint. She worried that they would make fun of her bandages, but no one said a word except to ask if she was in pain. She felt quite loved.

“Does this mean you don’t have to write any papers?” asked her friend Conroy.

Athena laughed. “No, it just means my handwriting will be terrible. I’ll have to use my left hand.”



At lunch, Athena approached Ms. Jada. They hadn't spoken much since the school meet-and-greet, but Athena already liked her. They shared a love of learning.

"Ms. Jada, I have an idea for a class project."

Her teacher smiled. "I would love to hear it, Athena."

She took a deep breath to organize her thoughts. Then, she said, "There's a tree branch blocking the sidewalk on my way to school. It's been there all week, and it's the reason I crashed my bike a few days ago. Do you think we could write a letter to the mayor about it?"

"I think that's a wonderful idea," Ms. Jada replied. "We'll work on it this afternoon, all right?"

Athena smiled back at her. "Thank you."



That afternoon, Athena and her classmates brainstormed ideas for their letter. They then nominated Athena's friend Zosia to write it, since she had beautiful penmanship. It reads:

Dear Mr. Mayor,

We, the students of Ms. Jada's fourth grade class, are writing to you about the fallen tree branch on Oak Street. It is blocking the sidewalk and caused one of us to fall off her bike this week.

We ask that this problem be given immediate attention. We know you care about the health and safety of students and hope that you will take our request into consideration.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Ms. Jada's 4th Grade Class

Athena read the letter aloud, and everyone cheered. They were about to participate in government, just like their parents and teachers! Ms. Jada handed Conroy an envelope, and he put the letter inside. Zosia addressed it and added a stamp, and Ms. Jada promised to mail it the following day. All that was left to do was wait for a reply.



A couple of weeks later, Athena and her friends received a response from the mayor. Athena was still wearing her splint, but according to Dr. Diego, her wrist was healing nicely and would be just fine in a few weeks.

Though she hadn't been biking to school, Odin told her that the tree branch was gone. Athena was on pins and needles, waiting to find out if it was her class's letter that made a difference.

Ms. Jada opened the envelope from the mayor's office and read:

To the students of Ms. Jada's 4th grade class:

Thank you for writing to inform me of the fallen tree branch on Oak Street. I admire your community spirit and concern. It will take you far in life.

By the time you receive this letter, the branch will be gone. Our local tree experts are removing it at this very moment. If you wish to bike to school, it is now safe to do so.

Don't forget your safety gear!

*Sincerely,
Mayor Favian*

Athena squealed. It was their letter that made a difference. She smiled as the whole class erupted in applause. There was something satisfying about prompting a change in their community—even if Athena was confined to a splint.

In several weeks, when she was allowed to ride her bike again, she would do so with the appropriate safety gear. It was bulky and uncomfortable, yes, but she knew she would get used to it eventually. And more importantly, it would keep her out of the hospital. She had seen enough of it for one year.

Plus, since receiving Mayor Favian's letter, many of Athena's classmates had begun riding their bikes to school. Everyone wore their helmets, wraps, and pads—and no one looked funny. Maybe, Athena dared to hope, her safety gear didn't make her look funny either.



When she got home that evening, she put on her helmet, pads, and left wrist wrap and stood in her bathroom mirror. To her surprise, she didn't look ridiculous at all. She looked... prepared. Even with her splint, she felt confident and safe. She thought she might be nervous to get back on her bicycle, but standing there, Athena knew she would be fine.

She laughed. *Definitely not a blue marshmallow.*



You can practice health policy just like Athena. Be mindful of injury prevention and road safety and encourage your loved ones to do the same. Together, we can create safer, healthier environments for everyone in our communities.

THE END



Writing this series of storybooks is a dream come true and is more rewarding than I ever could have imagined. I want kids of all ages to know that working in health policy is as viable as becoming a doctor, an architect, a teacher, or a farmer.

Thank you so much to my teammates for helping me conceptualize and write each book; to our amazing editor, Aquinnah Bree; and to our talented illustrators, Melina Sugliano and Rodrigo Palacios. In creating this series, we have also created a lifelong bond.

- Ana Rita Gonzalez, President & CEO, Policy Wisdom LLC

We truly hope you enjoyed reading this edition in the Athena's
Adventures in Health Policy series!

We invite you to encourage the young people in your life
who are interested in public health to learn more about us
and our networks.

Please follow us on social media and join the conversation!



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In her most daring adventure yet, Athena is given permission to ride her bike to school. Her parents and doctor have a lot to teach her about road safety and injury prevention, but Athena isn't interested.

She thinks she looks ridiculous in her safety gear and refuses to wear it. But when she falls off her bike and winds up in the emergency room, Athena must make a choice: practice injury prevention or have her cycling privileges taken away.

Through Athena's Adventures in Health Policy, Policy Wisdom aims to inspire the next generation of public health professionals and show them the importance and impact of health policies. Learn more about our mission at policywisdom.com.

