

Winter Sports Injury Prevention



Winter means cold temperatures, snowstorms, and fun winter sports for millions of people. For most winter sports, proper and well-fitting equipment, good physical conditioning, common sense, and good sportsmanship can help eliminate many injuries.

More than 440,000 people were treated at hospitals, doctor's offices, and emergency rooms for winter sports-related injuries in 2010 (Consumer Product Safety Commission).

Common winter sports injuries include sprains, strains, dislocations, and fractures. Many of these injuries happen at the end of the day, when people overexert themselves to finish that one last run before the day's end. A majority of these injuries can easily be prevented if participants prepare for their sport by keeping in good physical condition, staying alert, and stopping when they are tired or in pain.

Winter Sports Safety Tips

- Never participate alone in a winter sport.
- Keep in shape and condition muscles before participating in winter activities.
- Warm up thoroughly before playing or participating. Cold muscles, tendons, and ligaments are vulnerable to injury.
- Wear appropriate protective gear, including goggles, helmets, gloves and padding.
- Check that equipment is working properly prior to use.
- Wear several layers of light, loose and water- and wind-resistant clothing for warmth and protection. Layering allows you to accommodate your body's constantly changing temperature. Wear proper footwear that provides warmth and dryness, as well as ample ankle support.
- Know and abide by all rules of the sport in which you are participating.
- Take a lesson (or several) from a qualified instructor, especially in sports like skiing and snow boarding. Learning how to fall correctly and safely can reduce the risk of injury.

- Pay attention to warnings about upcoming storms and severe drops in temperature to ensure safety.
- Seek shelter and medical attention immediately if you, or anyone with you, is experiencing hypothermia or frostbite. Make sure everyone is aware of proper procedures for getting help, if injuries occur.

If you fall into icy water...

Keep calm; avoid thrashing around. Extend arms over edge of ice and kick vigorously to propel yourself onto the ice. A pocket knife, belt buckle, or keys might help to get a grasp. Once onto the ice, roll gently away from the break and do not stand up until on a firm surface.

To rescue others...Reach, throw and go. Reach with a branch, rope, board, blanket, sled, or jacket. Throw the person a floatation device, like an inner tube, cooler. Go or send someone to call 911.

Source: American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons; Consumer Product Safety Commission