

## Sledding, Skiing, Skating and Safety

People spend hours of recreation time on activities ranging from sledding, snow skiing and tobogganing to ice hockey, ice skating and snow boarding. According to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS), however, if the proper precautions are not taken to ensure warmth and safety, severe injuries can occur.

Winter sports injuries get a lot of attention at hospital emergency rooms, doctors' offices and clinics. Injuries include sprains and strains, dislocations and fractures. In 2004, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission reported:

- 51,524 injuries from ice hockey
- 49,600 injuries from ice skating
- 74,000 injuries from sledding, snow tubing and tobogganing
- 35,483 injuries from snowmobiling
- 143,990 injuries from snow boarding
- 144,379 injuries from snow skiing

Many winter sports 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.

The AAOS urges children and adults to follow these tips for preventing winter sports injuries:

- Never participate alone in a winter sport.
- Keep in shape and condition muscles before partaking in winter activities.
- Warm up thoroughly before playing. Cold muscles, tendons and ligaments are vulnerable to injury.
- Wear appropriate protective gear, including goggles, helmets, gloves and padding.
- Check that equipment is in good working order and used properly.
- 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.
- Drink plenty of water before, during and after activities.
- Avoid participating in sports when you are in pain or exhausted.