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BE PREPARED – SAFETY TIPS FOR WINTER SPORTS

Orthopedic surgeons provide tips to protect bones and joints

The following was published by PRNewswire on Dec. 18, 2023. Muscatine Fire joins the efforts to spread the word on a variety of safety topics. This is one in a series of Community Risk Reduction articles.

ROSEMONT, Ill. - Participating in winter sports and outdoor activities is a common way to boost both one's physical and mental fitness during the coldest months of the year. However, these pastimes also carry unique risks of injuries due to bulky equipment, slippery surfaces and frigid temperatures.

The [American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons](#) (AAOS) encourages winter athletes of all stripes to exercise cautionary measures to ensure strong musculoskeletal health throughout the

Winter Sports Safety Tips

Snowboarding	Sledding	Skiing
 <p>Always check the weather before heading to the slopes; time of day can also effect visibility and make obstacles hard to see</p> <p>Wear proper fitting protective gear; helmets can reduce head injuries</p> <p>If you have to stop, stop on the side of the run, not in the middle</p> <p>Look both ways and uphill before crossing a trail, merging or starting down hill</p> <p>Beginners should invest in proper instruction to learn how to fall and get back up; experienced skiers should take a refresher course</p>	 <p>Get in shape well before the season begins; a regular workout routine will help reduce fatigue and injuries</p> <p>Riders should sit or lay on their back on top of the sled with feet pointing downhill</p> <p>Do not sled on or around frozen lakes, streams or ponds</p> <p>Check slopes for bare spots, holes and obstructions</p> <p>Snowboarders, skiers or sledders, no matter how experienced, should never ski or slide alone</p>	 <p>Use skis with breaks or snowboards with a leash to prevent runaway equipment</p> <p>Give skiers in front of you the right of way; they most likely can't see you</p> <p>Never ski on closed runs or out of boundaries because these areas are not monitored and there is no way to know what the snow conditions are</p> <p>Excess speed, loss of control and collisions with stationary objects, is the most common factor in fatalities</p> <p>Dress warmly to protect against frostbite and injury</p>





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season.

"Participating in sports always presents an increased risk of orthopaedic injury, but colder weather and icy areas compound the issue," said orthopaedic surgeon and AAOS spokesperson Catherine Logan, MD, MBA, PT, FAAOS. "Winter sports require their own strategies, such as properly fitting helmets and mindfulness of which trails have been prepped for activities like snowboarding and skiing, to ensure safety."

Winter sports injuries are preventable, especially when armed with knowledge about common pitfalls and how to avoid them. Understanding the most common of these injuries and the reasons they occur is the first step in avoiding them.

Causes of Winter Sports Injuries

More than 110,000 people were treated at hospitals, doctors' offices, and emergency rooms for injuries related to [winter sports in 2021](#), according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. This figure includes:

- 57,000 injuries from snow skiing and snowboarding (51.44%)
- 17,000 injuries from ice hockey (15.49%)
- 17,000 injuries from sleds, toboggans and snow discs (15.45%)
- 14,000 injuries from ice skating (12.64%)

Tips to Reduce Risk for Winter Sports Injuries

According to Dr. Logan, there are many ways to reduce your risk for winter sports injury. She notes that while collisions and falls constitute a significant portion of trauma, excessive speed, adverse conditions, overconfidence or lack of fear are also common. Consider the following:

- Warm up thoroughly before playing or participating. Cold muscles, tendons, and ligaments are vulnerable to injury.



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- Wear appropriate protective gear, including goggles, helmets, gloves and padding.
- 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.
- Take a lesson (or several) from a qualified instructor, especially in sports like skiing and snowboarding. 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.
- 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.

For more information about winter sports injury causes, symptoms and treatments, visit [OrthoInfo.org](#). Additional tips for preventing cold-weather injuries, including proper [snow-shoveling](#) techniques, are also available.

About the AAOS

With more than 39,000 members, the [American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons](#) is the world's largest medical association of musculoskeletal specialists. The AAOS is the trusted leader in advancing musculoskeletal health. It provides the highest quality, most comprehensive education to help orthopaedic surgeons and allied health professionals at every career level to best treat patients in their daily practices. The AAOS is the source for information on bone and joint conditions, treatments and related musculoskeletal health care issues; and it leads the health care discussion on advancing quality.

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SOURCE American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons