



Education and proper equipment are keys to winter sports safety

We are lucky enough to live in a climate where winter sports play an important role in our outdoor recreation. But, winter sports bring their own set of safety risks. In fact, nearly 50,000 children were treated in emergency departments in 2013 for injuries related to skiing, snowboarding and sledding. Learning about the risks and using proper safety equipment can help keep kids safe and having fun. The following is information provided by the Kohl's Cares Grow Safe & Healthy Program that outlines some of these risks and proper equipment to help stay injury free.

Skiing

Downhill skiing is one of the most popular winter sports, but one that does carry risk of injury. Many injuries are the result of falls and collisions with stationary objects. Deaths are caused by injuries to the head and neck.

- Always wear a winter helmet when skiing. Rent or buy one that allows space for goggles and ventilation when skiing.
- Rent or buy skis that are appropriate to the size and ability of the child, and have skis fitted by a professional.
- Prevent leg injuries by checking to make sure bindings release when your child falls.
- Make sure boots are comfortable, fit properly and are snugly buckled to give proper foot and ankle support.
- Goggles are best to protect your eyes from harmful rays, cold, branches and other hazards.

Snowboarding

Snowboarding is the fastest growing winter sport in the U.S. Injuries related to snowboarding are often to the upper extremities and ankles.

- Always wear a winter helmet when snowboarding.
- All-mountain snowboards are best for beginners. A board's length should be appropriate for the child's height and ability.
- Boots should be specific to snowboarding and laced tightly to provide proper foot and ankle support. Do not use hiking or snow boots.
- Broken wrists are common snowboard injuries. Wrist guards help protect from these injuries if a child falls while snowboarding.
- Goggles are best for overall eye protection.

Sledding

Anywhere there is a snowy hill, you are likely to find people sledding. Injuries from sledding are common, and are most often caused by collisions with other sledders or fixed objects on or near the hill. Injuries include: head and chest trauma, fractures and organ injury.

- More than 30 percent of children hospitalized for a sledding injury suffered serious head injuries. Always wear a winter helmet when sledding.
- The safest sleds are ones that can be steered by riders and have brakes. Tubes, saucers and toboggans cannot be steered and are harder to control. Good sleds are generally inexpensive and worth the investment.
- Choose a safe hill with a long, flat area at the bottom for kids to glide and stop. Avoid hills that are too steep, end near a street or parking lot, pond, fences or other hazards.
- Wear layers of warm winter clothing, but leave the scarf at home. Scarves can get caught in a sled and cause choking or strangulation.

Unintentional or accidental injury remains the leading cause of death in children ages 18 and younger in the United States. Research shows that, through education and awareness, many of these injuries are preventable. The Kohl's Cares Grow Safe & Healthy Program, a partnership between Kohl's Cares® and Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, provides valuable safety information for children, parents and caregivers. For more information, visit KohlsSafeandHealthy.com.