

**fallfreeze**zone



**SPORTS**

## **Skiing, Snowboarding, and Sledding Safety for Children Ages Six to 19 Years**

In New York State (NYS), on average, almost 3,000 children ages 19 and younger are treated each year at a hospital for injuries sustained while either skiing or snowboarding.

More than 15 percent of children who are hospitalized and more than 10 percent of those seen as outpatients at hospital emergency departments for this type of injury sustain a traumatic brain injury, the most severe type of head injury. More than 90 percent of these traumatic brain injuries are sustained by children ages 10 to 19.

The good news is that **you**, as a parent or caregiver, can play a major role in preventing skiing, snowboarding, and sledding injuries.

### **What protective equipment should my child wear?**

- The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons recommends that children ages 12 and under wear a helmet when sledding and that all athletes wear helmets while skiing and snowboarding to reduce the risk of sustaining a head injury.
- All athletes should wear the appropriate protective gear designed for the sport: skiers should have skis with safety bindings and snowboarders should wear gloves with built-in wrist guards. Both skiers and snowboarders should wear goggles.

### **What kind of clothes should my child wear while skiing, snowboarding, and sledding?**

- Wearing several layers of light, loose and water- and wind-resistant clothing will ensure warmth (such as gloves and hats). Scarves should not be worn because they can become tangled or caught in a rope tow or chair lift and cause choking.
- Layering allows the wearer to add and remove clothing to accommodate the body's constantly changing temperature when outside.
- Make sure your child wears appropriate footwear that provides warmth and dryness, as well as ankle support when skiing and snowboarding.

### **What types of possible hazards should I be aware of?**

- Become familiar with the location of fences, trees, rocks, open water, and patches of ice. Skiers and snowboarders should stay on marked trails that are appropriate for their skill level.
- Avoid potential avalanche areas, such as steep hillsides with little vegetation.
- Be aware of warnings about upcoming storms and severe drops in temperature to ensure safety.

### **Should my child take skiing or snowboarding lessons?**

If your child is starting sports like skiing and snowboarding, he or she should take one or more lessons from a qualified instructor. This will teach him or her the basic skills needed.

### **Are there any techniques that can reduce the impact of a fall?**

Learning how to fall safely can reduce the risk of injury. In case of a fall, children should roll over naturally, turning their heads in the direction of the roll, and try to land on the side of the body or buttocks.

### **Is it important that I supervise my child while they play winter sports?**

Yes. Young children should always be supervised by an adult. Depending on skill and maturity level, older teens may not necessarily require adult supervision, but should always ski, snowboard, or sled with a friend.

### **Where can I find more information about skiing, snowboarding, and sledding safety?**

- American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons ([www.aaos.org](http://www.aaos.org))
- American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons - Position statement on helmet use for skiing and snowboarding ([www.aaos.org/about/papers/position/1152.asp](http://www.aaos.org/about/papers/position/1152.asp))
- American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons - Skiing Safety ([www.orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=A00321](http://www.orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=A00321))
- National Safety Council Fact Sheet on Sledding ([www.downloads.nsc.org/pdf/factsheets/Tips\\_for\\_Safer\\_Sledding\\_and\\_Tobogganing.pdf](http://www.downloads.nsc.org/pdf/factsheets/Tips_for_Safer_Sledding_and_Tobogganing.pdf))

NYS Data Source: NYS DOH, Bureau of Injury Prevention  
[http://www.health.state.ny.us/prevention/injury\\_prevention/](http://www.health.state.ny.us/prevention/injury_prevention/)  
SPARCS GEN07MTH 2009