



With snow falling in the Cascades, many Oregonians are turning their sights to skiing, snowboarding and other winter activities. Although exciting and a great way to get exercise, winter sports can present unique physical and environmental challenges.

Even though these are winter activities, be sure to stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water during and after participating in winter sports. Most importantly, know the limitations of your body. Don't attempt activities that are beyond your level of conditioning and skill; over-use injuries may result.

The most common downhill skiing injuries are sprains and tears of knee ligaments, often resulting from falling with a twisting motion. While most knee sprains will heal with time, an ACL tear may require surgery to return to the mountain. Thumb and shoulder injuries can also occur. Proper pre-season conditioning, along with appropriate bracing, can reduce the chance of injury.

Cross-country skiing involves more environmental challenges. Extended exposure to winter-time temperatures can lead to frostbite of the ears, nose and cheeks. Mild frostbite can be easily treated by immediate warming of the affected area. (If left untreated, frostbite may lead to ne-

crosis — tissue dying — and result in amputation.) Hypothermia is another concern, and can lead to death if untreated. Early symptoms include shivering, poor judgment and balance problems. The best way to avoid cold-related injuries is to wear layers of warm, dry clothes to protect the core of the body from the cold. Carrying a change of dry clothes in the car is also helpful.

Snowboarding injuries usually involve the upper extremities, since both feet are held stable on the board, protecting the knees from twisting. When snowboarders fall, they tend to land on their hands, shoulders and heads; the most common injury is a wrist fracture, followed by sprains of the wrist, elbow and shoulder. Wrist guards and helmets can be used for protection.

Many people like to snow shoe in the winter. It is important to carry a map, compass, and plenty of water and food. If you are going into the backcountry, be sure to let someone know your route and return time.

Ice hockey is considered a winter sport, although it can be played throughout the year. The most common hockey injuries involve the knee and the shoulder. Most injuries occur in games and are traumatic in nature.

On the slopes, injuries should be evaluated carefully before moving any affected limbs. If it's safe and you aren't in too much pain, proceed down the mountain to the First Aid tent. If mov-

ing is too painful, wait for the Ski Patrol to come get you. If the injury results in neck pain, medical evaluation should be done before moving or being moved. If you suspect a concussion, see a physician before continuing any winter sport. Symptoms include dizziness, headaches, visual changes or memory loss.

Remember, wearing proper gear, staying hydrated and knowing your body's limitations will go a long way in preventing injuries and ensuring you have a good time this winter.



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