

Winter Sports Safety Tips

Whether skiing, sledding, ice skating, or just building a snowman, children love to play outside in the winter. However, each year thousands of children require emergency medical care because winter sports injuries. UVa Children's Hospital offers the following reminders to help keep kids safe this winter:

Clothing

- Dress in layers. A good rule is to dress young children in one more layer than an adult would wear in the same weather.
- Make sure children wear hats. Most body heat is lost through the head.
- Be aware of National Weather Service advisories regarding wind chill. There is a danger of hypothermia at temperatures as high as 50 degrees if there is lots of wind and/or dampness.
- Infants lose body heat more quickly than older children or adults do, so plan accordingly if you are planning to take your baby outside.
- Apply sunscreen on exposed areas of skin, even on a cloudy day.
- Remove all drawstrings from children's clothing to prevent strangulation.

Outside Play

- Don't allow children to play outside alone. Have kids establish a "buddy system" and be sure to have adult supervision for children under 8 years old.
- Check occasionally to make sure children are warm and dry. Make sure younger children take frequent breaks indoors.
- Children should not make snow forts or tunnels because they can collapse and suffocate a child.

- Children shouldn't play on snow banks formed by snowplows. Oncoming plows and/or other traffic might not see them.
- Children shouldn't throw snowballs. Snowballs can cause injury (especially to the eyes).

Ice Skating

- Never assume it is safe to skate on a lake or pond, even if it looks completely frozen. Winter temperatures in most parts of Virginia usually are not cold enough to form ice thick enough for safe skating (ice needs to be at least 4 inches thick).
- Ice that forms on moving waters such as rivers and creeks is never safe for skating or play.
- Skate in the same direction as the crowd.
- Never skate alone.
- Throw away chewing gum or candy before skating.
- Wear wrist guards to protect wrists from falls.

Sledding

- Make sure terrain is free from obstacles and far from traffic.
- Sled only on packed snow (not ice).
- Check for snow-covered hazards such as rocks, tree stumps.
- Use equipment that is sturdy and safely constructed.
- Examine hand-holds on sled to be sure they are secure.
- Avoid lying flat on the sled while riding downhill.
- Never ride a sled that is being pulled by a vehicle.
- Sled feet first or sitting up, don't lie down head-first.

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Skiing and Snowboarding

- Consider enrolling in at least one skiing/ snowboarding lesson to start off on the right track.
- Use caution when entering and exiting the ski lift.
- Do not ski out of control or too fast.
- Be aware of other people (and equipment) on the slopes.
- Wear a ski helmet and eye protection.
- Never ski alone.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children under 7 should not snowboard.

At UVa Children's Hospital, caring for children is our specialty. We have more than 500 healthcare professionals dedicated to treating children in an environment specially designed for kids and their families. UVa Children's Hospital encompasses a pediatric emergency department, a state-of-the-art Newborn Intensive Care Unit, an intensive care unit (PICU), acute care facilities, the Kluge Children's Rehabilitation Center and an extensive network of primary and specialty care clinicians.

Our goal is to get kids back to being kids.

For more information, call

434-982-0808.

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