

THINKFIRST CANADA'S ALPINE SKIING INJURY PREVENTION TIPS

Skiing is increasing in popularity in Canada but carries with it a measure of risk. ThinkFirst Canada's top tips to reduce your chances of sustaining a catastrophic injury while alpine skiing are below. This information is taken from Chapter 23 "Alpine Skiing" in the ThinkFirst book entitled *Catastrophic Injuries in Sports and Recreation: Causes and Prevention – A Canadian Study* edited by Charles H. Tator and published by the University of Toronto Press in 2008.



TOP TIPS: THINKFIRST BEFORE HITTING THE SLOPES

- Engage in pre skiing conditioning to improve physical capacity to maintain control.
- Warm up and stretch before skiing.
- When possible skiers should have formal lessons from accredited ski instructors.
- Monitor snow and weather conditions
- Wear a helmet: one study in British Columbia found that head injuries occurred at a rate of 0.005% for every 1000 skiers. Most experts recommend that all skiers wear a helmet
- Equipment selection should be guided by professionals.
- Equipment should be maintained in good working order.
- Follow the Alpine Responsibility Code, which is a set of rules of conduct for skiers and snowboarders and includes the following:
 - Never ski alone.
 - Stay on marked trails.
 - Stay away from trees, poles, fences and pylons.
 - Be alert to physical and environmental hazards.
 - Ski and snowboard on hills that are within ability and skill level.
 - Quit before becoming too tired.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Alpine skiing is the most popular snow sport.
- Most injuries in alpine skiing are non-catastrophic and the majority of injuries are preventable.
- The McLaren study (1996) found that, in Ontario, injury rate for skiing was 4800 per 100,000 participants.



- Fortunately, the incidence of most ski related injuries has declined even though participation rates have increased. Unfortunately, the incidence of life threatening or long term disability injuries has grown.
 - Catastrophic injury occurs at a rate of 3.2 participants per 100,000 participants per year in the ThinkFirst-Tator study (2008).
 - Males incurred 75% of the catastrophic injuries.
- 64.6% of the catastrophic injuries in the ThinkFirst-Tator study were sustained by those between the ages of 11-30.
 - Most of the fatalities in the ThinkFirst -Tator study were due to head injuries.

Risk Factors to Consider

Control: loss of control on the slopes is a major contributing factor to ski related injuries, causing skiers to collide with objects. Fatigue, inexperience, speed, faulty equipment, and risk taking are factors influencing control.

Attitude: risk taking behavior increases the risk of injury.

Experience: inexperience increases the likelihood of injury according to some studies.

Alcohol: as with most activities, the consumption of alcohol is a risk factor.

Environment: snow conditions may increase skier speed, putting skiers at risk of injury. As well, avalanche prone areas put skiers at greater risk of injury or death.

Remember: thinkfirst.ca before you play!