

THINKFIRST CANADA'S TOBOGGANING AND SLEDDING INJURY PREVENTION TIPS

A fun, easy, and economical way to enjoy the winter months with your family is hitting the tobogganing hills. Here are ThinkFirst Canada's top tips for reducing your risk of sustaining a catastrophic injury while tobogganing. This information is taken from Chapter 26 "Tobogganing and Sledding" 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:

- Wear a helmet. Because of the high incidence of head injuries, everyone should be properly fitted with a helmet: either a ski helmet, snowboard helmet, or hockey helmet.
- Hills should be regularly inspected and closed if conditions are dangerous.
- Hills should be free of obstacles such as rocks, fences, poles and trees. They should be located a safe distance from roads, rivers, lakes, and parking lots.
- Safe hills should have a sufficiently long, clear run-out at the bottom of the hill, free of obstacles
- Children should be supervised.
- Teach children to slide down the middle of the hill, climb up the sides of the hill, and to watch for oncoming sledders while ascending the hill.
- Teach children to move out of the way quickly when they reach the bottom of the hill.
- Don't use hills after dusk unless proper lighting is provided.
- There should be a designated area at the side of the hill for climbing up.
- Use the sitting position when going down hills. **Do not go head first.**
- Don't go out in icy or excessively cold conditions.
- Ensure that the sled is in good condition and does not have any broken parts.

DID YOU KNOW?

- In the ThinkFirst-Tator study (2008) it was determined that there was an average of 37.7 catastrophic injuries per 100 000 sledders.
- This rate of catastrophic injury is the fourth highest rate of injury determined during the ThinkFirst-Tator study of catastrophic injury in sport.
- Of the catastrophic injuries recorded during the four year study, 50% were to the head and 22.5% were to the spine.
- In the ThinkFirst-Tator study the most common reason for injury was collision with a tree.
- According to the ThinkFirst-Tator study, 59% of respondents reported that the injuries were preventable.

Risk Factors to Consider

Alcohol: 7% of the cases studied involved alcohol.

Supervision: Where information was available 93% of the cases of catastrophic injury did not involve supervision.

Sledding Terrain: close proximity to roads, icy conditions, and hills with obstacles increase the risk of injury.

Type of sled: some evidence suggests that snow racers increase the risk of injury.

The ThinkFirst-Tator study had this to say about sled types:

“Particular types of toboggans and sleds lead to an increased risk of specific injuries. Generally, the participant’s spine is more susceptible to injury in sleds in which the participants are in the sitting position, such as inner tubes, toboggans and the popular GT snow racers, while the abdomen and head are more susceptible to injury on toboggans or sleds ridden in the prone position [lying on one’s stomach], such as crazy or magic carpets. It appears that the most dangerous single type of toboggan or sled is the GT snow racer...Snow racers generally have a braking system, which in combination with the steering capability, often gives the rider a false sense of security. Furthermore, unlike traditional toboggans or sleds, snow racers do not have a protective front panel.”

Remember: thinkfirst.ca before you play!