

## **AVOID WINTER SPORTS INJURIES THIS SKI SEASON**

This time of year usually offers ideal weather conditions in a lot of ski resorts across Europe, but recently ski resorts in Austria, France, Germany and Switzerland have been hit by unprecedented amounts of snow causing holidaymakers to become trapped, unable to leave due to road and rail closures. As the snow clears there is still the risk of avalanches so holidaymakers are being warned to be extremely cautious.

It has been recently reported<sup>1</sup> that ski holiday sales are up 60% on last year; and with more people forecast to hit the slopes than ever before, winter sport related injuries are also likely to rise.

Common winter sports ailments can be in the form of injuries to the head, knee, shoulder, spine, injuries to the wrist, and even to the thumb<sup>2</sup>. We are preparing ourselves for an influx of skiers and snowboarders needing orthopaedic and physiotherapy treatments.

Mr David Houlihan-Burne, Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon at BMI Bishops Wood Hospital offers the following advice for those people, “Pro skiers and snowboarders can make their sports look effortless on the telly, so it’s easy for some people to forget just how dangerous the slopes can be, especially for beginners.

“We would advise everybody embarking on snow sports this season to take all the available and necessary precautions to avoid injury. However, should you get injured, get expert medical attention as quickly as possible, seek a second opinion if needed and do not stray from your doctors or physiotherapists recommended treatment regime. Ignoring medical advice will only increase your pain, suffering and recovery time. ”

3 Rivers Clinic shares its top tips on how to avoid injury on the slopes:

- 1) No matter how confident you may feel beginners should always take lessons from a professional before they attempt to ski or snowboard. If you plan to snowboard, it’s crucial that you learn how to fall correctly to prevent any injury. You should never put your arms out to catch yourself as the impact and pressure on fingers and wrists can

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<sup>1</sup> <http://pr.lastminute.com/2011/03/17/ski-holiday-sales-increase/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ski-injury.com/specific-injuries>

break the bone. Whether falling forwards or backwards always ensure you bring your arms in close to your chest and fall onto your chest, back or shoulder.

- 2) You should always use equipment that matches your size and skill level, for example ski boots, winter sports clothing including a jacket, trousers and goggles, and ensure all the equipment is correct for the type of activity you are doing.
- 3) Safety equipment while partaking in winter sports is a must. Adults and children should wear safety gear including wrist guards and a helmet, and off-piste skiers should take extra precautions with safety equipment<sup>3</sup>.
- 4) Make sure to also stay hydrated throughout the day, regularly drinking water and avoiding alcohol as this can affect our judgement and reasoning, slows down reactions, upsets our sense of balance and coordination, impairs our vision and hearing, makes us lose concentration and can make us drowsy<sup>4</sup>, which could all contribute to causing an injury when skiing or snowboarding.
- 5) Make sure you warm up properly before skiing or snowboarding to avoid injury. Before putting on your gear, warm up and stretch the thigh, calf and arm muscles. A short walk of 10-20 minutes will increase blood flow to the muscles, increasing their flexibility. Start each day on the slopes with some easy runs to loosen up and do this after each rest break as well.

If you are unlucky enough to sustain an injury though, immediately follow the P.R.I.C.E principles:

**Protection** - use strapping or a support for comfort and to protect the area

**Rest** - rest the injured area

**Ice** - apply ice packs for 10 minutes every hour

**Compress** - use tubigrip or a compression bandage to help reduce the swelling - but not too tight! Check toes and fingers regularly for colour and temperature; remove the compression dressing at night.

**Elevate** - elevate or raise the injured part, ideally above the heart to help disperse swelling.

For Further information, please contact the clinic on :

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.skiclub.co.uk/skiclub/skiclubfreshtracks/safetysafetyequipment.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/facts/factsheets/alcohol-and-accidents>