



Snow Sledding Safety



Snow sledding is a popular winter recreational activity for families. However, sledding down a hill at up to 20 miles per hour on a piece of molded plastic with no ability to brake or steer requires safety precautions.

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What are the injury facts for youth when sledding?

Injuries commonly occur in collisions with fixed objects (e.g. trees and fences) and other people.

Sledding in an area that is open to vehicular traffic significantly increases the risk of severe injury.

The absence of adult supervision increases the risk of injury.

Common injuries include head trauma, fractured bones, and contusions or abrasions.

What developmental factors should be considered for assessing a safe level of sledding?

- The cognitive capacity to anticipate, recognize and react to potential hazards
- The good judgment to act responsibly, minimize risk, and react to potential hazards
- The physical capability to climb hills, hold onto sled, and regulate body temperature

What factors and strategies are key to safe sledding?

Personal Safety

- Adult supervision
- Limiting activity to developmental capabilities to prevent fatigue and cold exposure
- Wearing a helmet
- Wearing appropriate clothing to protect from the cold

Safe Environment

- Area free of obstacles
- Designated up and down routes
- Motor vehicle traffic not in proximity
- Adequate snow base with no protruding objects
- Sledding incline less than 30 degrees with a long run out
- Sledding during daylight hours, or in well-lit areas at night
- Providing areas for sledding only

Sled Safety

- Sled constructed of high quality materials without sharp edges that cannot be pierced by objects on the ground
- Sled is ridden in face forward, sitting position
- Sled has controlled direction
- Sled has easily gripped handles

What role do child safety advocates play in addressing sledding safety?

- Practice responsible sledding
- Evaluate current sledding opportunities for hazards
- Promote development of safe sledding environments and use of safe sleds
- Evaluate effectiveness of current prevention practices
- Monitor childhood injury reports/data
- Promote the role of parents in providing sledding safety and supervision
- Advocate for safe winter recreation policies and practices

Where can I go to learn more about sledding safety and youth?

Additional information and links on sledding-related safety for youth can be found on the National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety Web site <http://research.marshfieldclinic.org/children/Resources>. Information available includes a comprehensive listing of resources, a list of other organizations working on sledding-related safety, and injury prevention information. For technical assistance on youth sledding-related injury prevention call 1-800-662-6900.

The National Children's Center strives to enhance the health and safety of all children involved in agricultural work and living in rural settings. The center is a program of the Marshfield Clinic Research Foundation.



National Children's Center
for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety

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This publication was produced by CSN under its contract with the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, Public Health Service, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



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