



Tips for Safer Sledding and Tobogganing

Sliding downhill is an exhilarating winter sport. People of all ages can participate, and use all kinds of containers, from large toboggans to plastic disks or even cardboard boxes. But sledding unintentional injuries are surprisingly common despite snow's cushioning effect. The Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that the average number of tobogganing and snow disc injuries from 2003 to 2007 is 33,064 per year.

Sledding injuries often include facial lacerations or skull fractures. Tobogganing injuries almost always involve the lower half of the body.

Children ages 5 to 9 are most susceptible to injury. Parents of young children should not let them sled alone. Older children should be taught to check for hazards.

The National Safety Council offers these guidelines for safe and fun sledding and tobogganing:

- Keep all equipment in good condition. Broken parts, sharp edges, cracks and split wood invite injuries.
- Dress warmly enough for conditions.
- Sled on spacious, gently sloping hills which have a level run-off at the end so that the sled can come to a halt safely. Avoid steep slopes and slopes located near streets and roadways.
- Check slopes for bare spots, holes and other obstructions which might cause injury. Bypass these areas or wait until conditions are better.
- Make sure the sledding path does not cross traffic and is free from hazards such as large trees, fences, rocks or telephone poles.
- Do not sled on or around frozen lakes, streams or ponds because the ice may be unstable.
- The proper position for sledding is to sit or lay on your back on the top of the sled, with your feet pointing downhill. Sledding head first increases the risk of head injury and should be avoided.
- Sledders should wear thick gloves or mittens and protective boots to protect against frostbite as well as potential injury.