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ASK THE EXPERT

Prevention of Skiing Injuries

BY AL DESIMONE, M.D.



DESPITE THE LOWER INCIDENCE OF SKIING INJURIES over the last several years, there are still more than 500,000 skiing injuries in the United States every year. Though foot and ankle injuries are becoming less common, knee ligament sprains and upper extremity injuries are extremely prevalent. We have also seen an elevated number of injuries involving the head and neck region, as well as the lower spine.

After performing extensive research and giving multiple lectures on this topic, I think there are a number of pearls of wisdom to remember during skiing. Pre-season conditioning programs that include strength training focusing on flexibility and agility are recommended to all skiers to help reduce the incidence and severity of injuries. Though skiing instruction at the time of travel may lower the incidence of injuries, more specific injury prevention courses prior to going on a ski trip have been proven to lower the incidence of injuries.



Remember to acclimate yourself with rest, proper hydration and a high carbohydrate diet, as these elements will protect against fatigue. Most injuries occur within the first few days of skiing because most individuals progress very quickly to a high demand level of activity. To prevent injury progress slowly, avoid prolonged periods of rest and stop skiing prior to fatigue. Also keep in mind that late afternoon skiing has the highest incidence of injury mostly due to changes in skiing conditions.

When looking for the appropriate equipment, consider age, height, weight and level of expertise, as beginner skiers should even consider a helmet. Assure proper binding adjustments, as failure to do so has been associated with a higher occurrence of skiing related injuries. Falling backwards (sitting on your skis) may often result in significant injury. Always try to keep your knees flexed and remain balanced on your skis.

These are a few tips for all skiing enthusiasts of this season. Remember that safe skiing is always fun.

Al DeSimone, MD, is a Board Certified Orthopedic Surgeon. He is Sports Medicine Fellowship Trained in Shoulder and Knee Ligament Reconstructive Surgery. Dr. DeSimone is a partner in the Sports Medicine Associates of South Florida P.A. He practices at the South Florida Institute of Sports Medicine at 1600 Town Center Blvd., Suite C. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call (954) 389-5900.

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