



PREVENTING BACK PAIN AND SPORTS INJURIES FROM SKIING

With record levels of snowfall this year across the Alps many of us will be hitting the slopes this season. For many people though this much loved sport can flare up previous and current injuries. Therefore, we here at Hands-on Health Treatments have put together our recommendations for avoiding unnecessary injuries.



Pre-season advice:

Exercise: Begin exercising to prepare for skiing at least six weeks before getting on the ski slopes. You will have much more fun on the slopes if you're in good shape.

- * Get the heart pumping: Cycling gives an excellent cardiovascular workout as well as strengthening those all-important leg muscles.
- * Core work: Don't forget to work your tummy and back muscles– abdominal crunches, plank exercises and low back extensions will improve posture and balance when skiing –not to mention support that all important spine.
- * It's a balancing act: balance is an important factor in skiing. Use a wobble board to improve balance and build up ankle muscles. Rocking heel to toe is good for boarders, while left to right is best for skiers.
- * Check it out: most skiers and boarders find turning one way easier than the other. Poor technique might not be the problem – muscle and joint alignment could be. Visit us to sort out any spinal joint dysfunction and improve performance.



* Prepare for the weather. Wear layers of clothes and wear a helmet liner, a hat, or a headband. Wear gloves or mittens. Bring an extra pair in case the first pair gets wet.

* Use proper ski equipment. Don't borrow equipment. Rent from a ski shop or the ski resort. When buying equipment, make sure your ski boots are fitted properly. Skiers often choose on comfort alone – don't make this mistake. Get a moulded foot bed from the ski shop; this improves fit, comfort and ski control. Opt for a shop with a wide range of boots, so you are spoilt for choice. Talk to your Hands-on Health practitioner about advice on orthotics.

* Wear a helmet: Wearing protective headgear whilst skiing makes good sense.

On the Slopes:

Warm up: Always take at least one warm-up run down the easiest hill each time you begin skiing.

Respect your limits: Ski on slopes that fit within your ability level. Do not ski trails that are above your skill level. Trails will be clearly marked as to what level skier they are appropriate for. On a similar note, stay in control of your skis and focus on the trail you are skiing. Accidents happen more readily when we are distracted.

Take a break: If you're tired, take a break. The danger time for skiers is 4pm on the 3rd day of the holiday when after using unaccustomed muscles for 3 days your body is physically tired. Whilst you are resting, make sure you eat and drink enough. Skiing burns a lot of energy! When it's the end of the day, there's no need to try and get in a last run, or two, if you are tired. It's better to quit while you're ahead and save your energy for next time.

Ski with a friend: It's always safer to ski with a friend so they can watch out for you and vice versa. Prearrange a meeting place in case you get separated and using walkie-talkies is a great way to stay in touch.

Unresolved joint and muscle problems are a sure way of increasing your risk of injury. Be sure to consult your Hands-on Health Treatments practitioner before departing so that your holiday is pain and injury free. All it takes is a bit of care, attention and common sense to avoid injury. Remember pain is a warning – do not ignore it.