



Cold Weather Sports and Your Family

The Cold Weather Sports and Your Family was taken from www.kidshealth.org

Looking forward to the snowy season and all it has to offer? Winter can be a great time to get outside and keep fit — for you and your family.

But what if everyone in your house believes that winter is a time for hibernating in front of the TV? Don't despair: there are plenty of fun things the whole family can do once the weather turns frosty.

Beating the Cold-Weather Blahs

Once a chill is in the air, our bodies begin to want to conserve energy to use as heat. We tend to eat a little more and become less active. Being cooped up inside and a sedentary lifestyle can lead to the "cold-weather blahs." Kids might feel more tired, lethargic, or even a little bored.

A good way to kick this feeling is to get them out into the snow to play! Winter can be a great time for family activities that allow you to spend time with your kids while being active.

Types of Cold-Weather Sports

Skiing. Alpine (downhill) skiing is an easy sport to try, but novice skiers should take a lesson first and get instructions on staying safe. Many ski resorts have reasonably priced lessons for first-timers. A competent instructor can show kids the proper techniques while also ensuring they start on a hill that's appropriate for their skill level.

Cross-country skiing. For cross-country skiing, long, thin skis are used. This type of skiing uses a binding system that holds the ski boot to the ski by the boot's toe. This lets the heel move up and down naturally, enabling skiers to travel long distances and climb hills. It's a great cardiovascular workout and a wonderful way to enjoy the outdoors. Virtually any flat or near-flat snowy surface works.

Snowboarding. Snowboarding is also popular. Kids especially love this type of snow "surfing," and many resorts offer the equipment for rental along with traditional skis. Snowboarding uses different techniques than downhill skiing, so your family should take a few lessons first.

Snowshoeing. Snowshoeing doesn't require any particular skills or specialized equipment, and it can be done almost anywhere there's snow. The snowshoeing technique is as easy as walking, so anyone can do it. If you like walking, hiking, or running, you'll find that strapping on a pair of snowshoes is a great way to work out. The slower pace of snowshoeing also allows family members to stay together. Traditional snowshoes can be strapped onto any pair of boots without heels and can be rented from an outdoor equipment retailer.

Ice-skating. You may remember struggling with weak ankle support when ice-skating as a child, but great improvements in skate design have improved the skating experience. Take your family out to the rink for an afternoon or evening of ice-skating. Many rinks rent molded fiberglass skates that have more ankle support and warmth than figure skates.

Where Dangers Lurk

Our homes are supposed to be our safe havens--and most of the time they are. But every year, more than 33 million people are injured by consumer products in their "safe havens." Here are the "Top Five Hidden Home Hazards," according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission:

- 1. Magnets.** As the number of children's products containing magnets has increased, so have injuries. When these tiny magnets fall out of toys, children are tempted to swallow them. Though ingesting a single magnet may not cause a tragedy, swallowing two or more magnets (or a magnet and any other metal item) is cause for alarm. Such items can attract one another through the intestinal wall and pinch or twist the intestines--causing holes, blockages, infections, even death.
- 2. Recalled products.** The CPSC can get recalled items off retailers' shelves, but once a product is inside a home, the consumer has to be on the lookout. Pay attention to the recall announcements on the news and check for those items in your home.
- 3. Tip-overs.** It can be fatal for a child to pull over a large item like a television or a bookcase. Make sure such items are stable in their positions, and monitor children who go near them.
- 4. Windows and coverings.** Curtain and blind cords are choking hazards and should always be kept out of the reach of children. Don't rely on window screens to prevent children from falling out. Screens are designed to keep bugs out, not kids in.
- 5. Pool and spa drains.** Pool drain suction can be strong enough to hold an adult under water. However, most incidents involve children. Missing or broken drain covers are often the reason for these accidents. *For pool owners:* Install a safety vacuum release system that detects drain blockage and alters the pool pump or water circulation to prevent an accident. *For parents and guardians:* Check the drains, or at least determine where they are, before allowing children to use the pool.

This article was taken from the January edition of Cut & Paste.

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