



# Winter Recreation Safety Tips

Everything you need to know on how to keep kids safe during all types of winter recreation activities.

The winter season is a great time for kids and parents to get outside and enjoy the fun activities that the snow and ice can provide. We at Safe Kids Grand Forks are very supportive of getting outside and being active as a family and, to do that safely, we have some things for you to keep in mind during the winter.

## Prevent Frostbite – Dress Your Kids for the Elements

- The key to keeping kids dry and warm is to dress them in multiple thin layers.
  - Thermal base layer: thermal long Johns and warm socks
  - Insulating middle layer: one or two shirts, a sweater and a pair of pants
  - Water resistant outer layer: winter coat, snow boots, gloves or mittens and a hat
- Set reasonable time limits for your children to be playing outside. Keep tabs on how long your children have been outdoors, and have them come in periodically to warm up with a cup of hot chocolate or hot apple cider.
- Since infants lose body heat quickly, do your best to avoid taking them outdoors for extended periods of time.



## Skiing and Snowboarding

- Enroll in at least one lesson before skiing or snowboarding for the first time.
- Protect yourself! Use eye goggles and wear sun protection, even on cloudy days.
- Kids should always have adult supervision while skiing and snowboarding.
- Wear a helmet approved for your activity.

## Sledding

- Choose safe terrain:
  - Terrain should be free of obstacles such as rocks, tree branches, stumps and other debris.
  - Pick a slope made up of packed snow (not ice) and check to ensure that it is safely away from streets and traffic. Never sled down hills in parking lots or other areas where there is on-coming traffic.
- Select a good sled:
  - Always use a sled that has a steering device, such as a rope.
  - Avoid using makeshift sleds or ones with sloppy construction (sharp or jagged edges).
  - If possible, choose sleds with energy absorbing pads on the sled's seat(s).
- Always wear a helmet.



## Ice Skating

- Only skate on approved surfaces. Check for signs posted by law enforcement or parks and rec.
- Never go out on ice that an adult has not approved.
- Skate in the same direction as the crowd, and avoid darting across the ice.
- Wear a helmet approved for your activity.



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- Use sleds properly:
  - o Have children sit up on a sled with their feet towards the front. Lying flat on sleds increases the child's risk for head and abdominal injuries. Never let children sled head first.
  - o Never ride in sleds that are pulled by motorized vehicles.
  - o Make sure that the number of children riding on a given sled does not exceed the manufacturer's recommendations.

### Snowmobiling

Head injuries are the leading cause of snowmobile-related deaths. They can weigh up to 600 pounds and travel more than 90 mph.



- The American Academy of Pediatrics states that children under 16 years of age should not operate snowmobiles.
- Children under the age of 6 should never ride on a snowmobile.
- Adults, and children riding as a passenger, should wear a properly fitting helmet designed for snowmobiling.

### Winter Sports Helmets

- Wear a certified helmet when skiing, snowboarding, snow tubing or snowmobiling.
- There are specific helmets certified for each of these sports. Check to make sure children and adults have the appropriate helmet for their activity.
- While there are currently no helmets certified for ice skating or sledding; bicycle, skateboard, multisport, hockey or ski helmets can be used for these activities – a helmet is better than no helmet.
- Helmets should be sized appropriately for the person wearing them. It should fit snugly on the head and not wiggle from side-to-side. Be sure the chin strap is fastened so no more than one finger fits between it and the chin.
- While many ski resorts rent helmets, the proper sized helmet may not be available. Consider bringing your own so you know it will fit correctly.

### Pedestrian and Outdoor Safety

Winter can still be a great time to go for a walk or send children out to play.

Tips for pedestrians:

- Midwest winter daylight hours are short in supply. Make sure you and your child can be seen. Consider adding reflective material to coats and backpacks. Reflective tape can be found at your local hardware store.
- Sidewalks are slippery. Walk with caution as you approach an intersection as curbs can be especially hazardous.
- Make sure hats and coat hoods do not restrict your children's line of sight. A hat pulled down too low or large hood can restrict peripheral vision. Remind children to look left-right-left and make eye contact with drivers before crossing an intersection or street.
- Snow can get piled quite high at corners and crosswalks. Teach children to be extra cautious when crossing streets and assure that drivers can see them.
- Keep children off of snow banks along the road or in parking lots. Children can easily slip off snow banks into oncoming traffic. Also, road maintenance crews removing snow may not see children playing on snow banks.



Safe Kids Grand Forks has a variety of winter sports helmets available for sale. They come in several colors and can fit young children through adults. Call 701.780.1489 or email [safekids@altru.org](mailto:safekids@altru.org) to set up an appointment for fitting.

