

Play It Safe and Wear a Helmet!

Newfoundlanders enjoy all kinds of recreational activities outdoors and winter time is no exception. Whether snowmobiling, skating, playing hockey on a home-made rink, tobogganing or skiing, the opportunities are endless. Regardless of what you do, do so with safety in mind. Most injuries can be prevented. All it takes is a little preparation and the use of proper equipment. So if you are wondering what to give as a Christmas gift for that special person in your life who happens to enjoy an activity like downhill skiing or snowboarding, give a gift of protection and ensure they have the proper gear such as a helmet to wear this season.

Did you know that snowboarding and alpine (downhill) skiing combined are the second leading cause of injury related to snow and ice activities for Canadian children? These activities not only result in serious injuries and disabilities, but account for over half of the deaths in children due to traumatic head injuries. Research shows that downhill skiers are more likely to be hurt as a result of a collision with an object while snowboarders sustain injury due to falling.

According to the Canadian Paediatric Society wearing the proper equipment like a helmet while downhill skiing or snowboarding, can greatly reduce the risk of head injury. Studies show that for every 10 people who wear a helmet, up to 5 may avoid head injuries. Even at speeds of 19 km/h, a ski helmet can minimize brain damage in the event of a fall or collision.

So before you strap on those skis or a snowboard and head out for the hills, consider the following safety tips:

-Always wear a helmet that is specifically made for skiing and snowboarding. Helmets for sale in Canada should meet industry standards and have an attached certification label. Examples are CE, Snell or ASTM which are designed as mostly single impact helmets. This means that if a helmet has been dropped or the skier / snowboarder has been in a fall or single collision while wearing a helmet, even if it appears undamaged, the helmet should be replaced.

-Avoid using a second-hand helmet because the accident history and age of the helmet may not be known. Helmets over five years of age should be replaced as the plastic used in the helmets change over time and lose their ability to provide the proper protection. Also older helmets may not meet current safety standards.

-Take time for a proper fit! Ski helmets are not something to grow into. In order to protect they must be correctly fitted and secured. Different styles or brands might be needed to get the best fit. Ski and snowboard helmets should rest two finger widths above the eyebrow and be snug and comfortable with only one finger width under the chinstrap. Helmet pads should touch the cheeks and the forehead. The back of the helmet should not touch the nape of the neck. If goggles are worn, there should be very little to no gap between the top of the goggles and the helmet. Most helmets come with fitting instructions but buying from a reputable store and a knowledgeable salesperson will be very helpful when purchasing a properly fitting helmet.

-Be a role model and teach by example. If you expect your child or teen to wear a helmet while skiing or snowboarding than as a parent, you should do the same.

This season have fun in the snow, be safe and wear the head gear!

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