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Winter 'wound'erland

It's hard enough to get motivated for winter activity, having to battle the cold, the wind and the rain, let alone having to deal with an injury.

To avoid the burden of an injury this winter, those who are active need to remember to prepare themselves for the cold conditions. Without preparation, injuries are more likely to occur.

Winter injuries can include sprains, strains and blisters and in extreme cold conditions, such as when skiing or snowboarding, sunburn, snow blindness, frostbite and hypothermia can occur.

However wintry conditions should not be a barrier to being active.

Most cold-related injuries can be prevented with good preparation and the correct equipment.

To help prepare for winter activity, Smartplay, Sports Medicine Australia's sports injury prevention program funded by VicHealth and the Department of Planning and Community Development (Sport and Recreation Victoria), offers the following tips:

- Acclimatise yourself to exercising in colder weather. For example, train outdoors instead of inside.
- Cold muscles, tendons and ligaments are at greater risk of injury. Warm up, stretch and cool down for longer than usual.
- Be aware that sunburn can occur even on cold and cloudy days (especially when skiing or snowboarding as UV radiation is more severe in alpine regions). Apply broad-spectrum 30+ sunscreen to exposed skin. Also wear eyewear with UV protection.
- Dress in layers to trap heat and prevent heat loss. Add or remove layers of clothing as necessary according to exercise level/conditions.
- Clothing should be made of a material that will insulate, such as wool.
- Have warm, dry clothing available to reduce cooling during breaks and after activity.
- Make sure footwear fits properly. Footwear that is too tight or too loose will affect skin circulation and cause blisters.
- Try to avoid getting your feet wet. This will stop the skin tissue freezing, which sometimes happens when feet are cold and wet.
- Carry some snack or energy bars as fatigue increases the risk of injury.



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- Drink water before, during and after activity.
- If skiing or snowboarding stay on the designated slopes and ski with a companion.
- Consult a sports medicine professional for specific exercises (e.g. leg strength and balance for skiing) to ensure you are prepared and enjoy your winter activity.
- Don't drink alcohol. While an alcoholic drink seems to warm you up, it actually dilates your blood vessels, increasing blood flow to the skin thereby increasing heat loss by exchange to cold air.
- Those with a pre-existing medical condition affecting the feet, such as diabetes, should see a doctor before taking part in winter sports.

For further advice on how to reduce your risk of sporting injuries this winter, visit www.smartplay.com.au or contact Smartplay on phone 9674 8777 or email smartplay@vic.sma.org.au