

Sledding Safety – Sherry Biddle, CMSRN, BSN, EMT

With winter in full swing, many of us have experienced the first snow fall of the season. As your children embark on frosty adventures, it is extremely important to keep them safe while outdoors. When the first snowfall arrives, children and adults head outside to play. Sledding is one of the favorite outdoor winter activities for children in the North East. Although these activities are popular, they can both be quite dangerous. Research conducted by the American Academy of Pediatrics revealed some alarming statistics. An average of 20,000 kids each year are injured in sledding accidents. According to the AAP, 63.5% of sledding injuries involved the child's sled hitting a tree. 34% of the injuries were head injuries. 70% of children, who sustained an injury while sledding, ended up in the ICU. While sledding can be a fun activity, doing so carefully is extremely important. Some tips to help prevent injuries are:

- Sled in a clear area - Stay away from trees and poles which may be snow covered or hidden.
- Avoid hills which end in road where there is a chance of being struck by a vehicle
- Avoid hills that end in ponds or streams - These may appear frozen but are not
- Always ensure riders face forward
- Riders should be taught how to steer the sled, and what to do if it seems to be going off course
- Choose a hill that has a slope less than 30 degrees, and has a flat bottom as a landing area
- Separate smaller children from older children
- Ensure that adequate time is allowed for children to rewarm to prevent hypothermia
- Consider having children wear a helmet to protect the head
- Lastly, all sledding activities should be supervised by an adult.

<http://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/pages/Study-Examines-Sledding-Injuries-in-Children.aspx>

<http://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/news-features-and-safety-tips/Pages/Winter-Safety-Tips.aspx>

http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid_safe/outdoor/safety_sledding.html#

<http://www.safekids.org/blog/have-winning-winter-season-these-cold-weather-sports-safety-tips>