


Whether winter brings severe storms, light dustings, or just cold temperatures, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has some valuable tips on how to keep your children safe and warm. In addition to the recommendations below, it is important to set reasonable limits on outdoor play to prevent hypothermia and frostbite and make sure kids have a place to go warm up when they get cold. When weather is severe, **have children come inside periodically to warm up.**

Ice Skating

- Allow children to skate only on approved surfaces. Check for signs posted by local police or recreation departments, or call your local police department to find out which areas have been approved.
- Advise your child to:
 - Skate in the same direction as the crowd
 - Avoid darting across the ice
 - Never skate alone
 - Not chew gum or eat candy while skating
 - Wear a helmet, knee pads, and elbow pads—especially while learning to skate

Sledding

- Keep sledders away from motor vehicles.
 - Children should be supervised while sledding.
 - Children less than 5 years of age should not sled alone.
 - Keep young children separated from older children.
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- Sledding feet first or sitting up, instead of lying down head-first, may prevent head injuries.
 - Consider having your child wear a (hockey not bicycle) helmet while sledding.
 - Sleds should be structurally sound and free of sharp edges and splinters, and the steering mechanism should be well lubricated.
 - Sled slopes should be free of obstructions like trees or fences, be covered in snow (NOT ice), not be too steep (slope of less than 30°), and end with a flat runoff.
 - Avoid sledding in crowded areas.

Skiing and Snowboarding

- Children should be taught to ski or snowboard by a qualified instructor in a program designed for children.
- Never ski or snowboard alone.
- Young children should always be supervised by an adult. Older children's need for adult supervision depends on their maturity and skill. If older children are not with an adult, they should always at least be accompanied by a friend.
- All skiers and snowboarders should wear a helmet. Ski facilities should require helmet use, but if they do not, parents should enforce the requirement for their children.
- Equipment should fit the child. Skiers should wear safety bindings that are adjusted at least every year. Snowboarders should wear gloves with built-in wrist guards. Hip pads have been shown to be effective in preventing fractures, as well. Eye protection or goggles should also be used.
- Slopes should fit the ability and experience of the skier or snowboarder. Avoid crowded slopes.
- Avoid skiing in areas with trees and other obstacles.

Snowmobiling

- The AAP recommends that children under age 16 not operate snowmobiles and that children under age 6 never ride on snowmobiles.
- Do not use a snowmobile to pull a sled or skiers.
- Wear goggles and a safety helmet approved for use on motorized vehicles like motorcycles.
- Travel at safe speeds.
- Never snowmobile alone or at night.
- Stay on marked trails, away from roads, water, railroads and pedestrians.

Sun Protection

- The sun's rays can still cause sunburn in the winter, especially when they reflect off snow. Make sure to cover your child's exposed skin with sunscreen of at least 15 SPF.
- Consider using sunglasses.