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Outdoor Safety for Children

Facts

- While freezing winter temperatures keep many adults indoors, children may want to play outside all day. Each year, emergency rooms in the United States treat nearly 15,000 children for injuries related to sledding, and thousands more for injuries related to ice skating.
- Exposure to cold without adequate protection can result in frostbite.

Safe Behavior

- Dress children warmly. Clothing should consist of several layers and include boots, gloves or mittens, and a hat.
- Set reasonable time limits on outdoor play. Occasionally call children in to warm up. Provide warm drinks such as hot chocolate.
- Limit the amount of time that infants are outdoors when it is colder than 40 degrees. Infants lose body heat quickly.
- Children should skate only on approved surfaces. Check for posted signs or call local authorities to find out which areas have been approved.
- Children should be taught to skate in the same direction as the crowd and avoid darting across the ice. They should also use a "buddy system" and never skate alone.
- Children should sled on gently-sloping terrain covered with packed snow (not ice). Parents and caregivers should look for terrain that is free of obstacles and far from traffic.
- Sledding equipment should be sturdy and safely constructed. Avoid equipment with sharp or jagged edges.
- Children should be encouraged to sit up while riding downhill. Lying flat increases the chance of head and abdominal injuries.
- Sledding equipment should be easily steered. Avoid makeshift sleds.
- Tell children never to ride in a sled that is being pulled by a motorized vehicle.

Additional Materials

- For more information and resources about child injury prevention issues, contact Safe Kids Minnesota at the Minnesota Safety Council, 651-291-9150 or 800-444-9150.

Contact

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