

# Avoid Injury on the Slopes this Season

by Ronald F. Hollis, MD



**Colorado is a year-round playground.** When the air chills, many residents embrace the change of season and look forward to winter sports. Just as a golfer wouldn't knock the dust off their clubs the day of their first round, nor would a runner choose a half marathon for his first training run, we must prepare for the upcoming ski season. Unfortunately, injuries are fairly common during the ski season, especially knee injuries and fractures. Many of these injuries occur when the body is tired or ill prepared for the rigors of skiing and snowboarding. As winter sets in and the focus changes to the upcoming season, physical preparation must change as well to ensure a safe and healthy ski season.

## Conditioning

Skiing and snowboarding require an enormous amount of endurance. Being in shape heading into the season is hugely beneficial. Maintain an exercise routine to build aerobic (stamina) capacity through such activities as running, swimming, elliptical and hiking. For those who are more aggressive on the mountain, add in some interval training with sprinting and quick burst activities to prepare muscles for the challenge of all types of terrain.

## Stretching and Balance

Maintaining flexibility to muscle groups is an often-overlooked component in injury prevention. While skiing and snowboarding, muscles act as shock absorbers as we make our way down the hill, responding to enormous loads and unfamiliar positions. Stretching before, during and after any strenuous activity is an important way to alleviate muscle strains and soreness. A regular yoga routine is an excellent way to work on flexibility, as well as improve balance, which is crucial to maintaining good form on the mountain.

## Strength

Whether carving the middle of a groomer or tackling the bumps, leg strength is vital to making your way down the hill safely. Build leg strength with exercises such as lunges, squats and wall sits. Lateral lunges and jumps will help work on agility as well. Our Colorado Springs community provides abundant elevation changes, so use the hills to your advantage during your workouts to build leg strength.

## Sweat the Small Stuff

Although preparation during the weeks and months leading up to ski season is important, don't forget about the simple things we can do before and during each ski day to make our day more enjoyable. Get a good night's rest and drink plenty of water to maintain hydration. Limit alcohol consumption the night before skiing as this will lead to poor muscle performance as well as increased risk of altitude sickness from dehydration. Pack energy foods and snacks for a long day on the mountain to keep your energy level up and maintain peak performance. Finally, know when to call it quits and head in to enjoy *Après Ski*. Don't push yourself to take "one more run" or to ski or board aggressively at the end of a long day. Know and respect your physical limits. This will go a long way in preventing injury.



**Dr. Ron Hollis** is a board certified orthopedic surgeon with Colorado Springs Orthopaedic Group, the region's leader in orthopedic care. His main specialty areas include shoulder and knee problems as well as fracture care. He is the team doctor for the Colorado Springs Sky Sox, University of Colorado Colorado Springs and Coronado High School. For more information or to schedule an appointment with Dr. Hollis, visit [www.csog.net](http://www.csog.net) or call 719-632-7669.