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Skier's Thumb and Fractured Wrist Injuries In Snowboarding and Skiing

By Mark E. Pruzansky
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Of course for many, the cold weather means it's time to hit the slopes! And while the debate over whether skiing or snowboarding is the better winter sport goes on, there's no arguing that both of these popular activities can cause serious injuries to our wrists, hands and fingers.

It's all about knowing your limits when it comes to staying injury-free while participating in winter sports. Regardless of the sport you choose, the best way to avoid serious injury is to make sure that you've learned to fall correctly and to stick to slopes that are appropriate for your skill level.

Here are some tips on how to avoid common injuries that occur in skiing and snowboarding :

Skier's Thumb:

1. The best way to prevent a fall is to *know your limits* and choose only the slopes that are at a level appropriate for your ability.
2. If you feel that you're going to fall, make sure to *release your ski poles* as soon as possible. Then, fall on your uphill side with your hands slightly in front of you and above your knees. Don't fall back on your hands or on your side on your hands.
3. Use ski poles with a simple finger-groove grip for quick release. If you choose to wear wrist straps, make sure they remain loose so you have the ability to drop the ski poles quickly in case of a fall.
4. Symptoms of skier's thumb can occur minutes after the fall that caused the injury and often include pain at the base of the thumb, swelling of the thumb or an inability to grasp between your thumb and index finger. If you experience any of these symptoms after a fall, you should contact a doctor.

Wrist Fractures:

1. The best way to avoid a wrist fracture is to learn to fall correctly - either on your backside or onto your forearms. Because both feet are affixed to the same board in snowboarding,

the natural - and most dangerous - reaction is to outstretch your hand to stop a fall, which puts you at risk for a fractured wrist.

2. Always wear a pair of snowboarding wrist guards to reduce the risk of injuries in case falls do happen.
3. Know your limits: falls and wrist injuries are most likely to happen to beginners who haven't yet mastered their balance on a snowboard. Practice falling and going down easy slopes before you tackle more difficult inclines.
4. Symptoms of a wrist fracture include pain and swelling of the wrist, as well as possible wrist deformity. Snowboarders experiencing any of these symptoms should contact a doctor immediately.

Mark E. Pruzansky, MD is director of the Manhattan-based HandSport Surgery Institute, an attending physician at Mount Sinai Medical Center and Medical School, and a pioneer in the field of hand and upper extremity surgery and sports injuries.

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