



Risk Management Considerations for Helmets

We always recommend that children wear helmets when they go tobogganing. But what type of helmet is the best to wear?

During the wintertime, there is an increase in the number of children admitted to hospitals for head injuries resulting from winter activities such as tobogganing. With no clear answer on what type of headgear works best, people look to what they already have in the closet.

A study suggests that the best helmet for heading to the hill is a hockey helmet. A study published on January 20th, 2012 in the *Journal of Neurosurgery: Pediatrics* compared the three types of helmets that are typically worn by children tobogganing: a hockey helmet, a ski/ snowboarding helmet and a bike helmet. The helmets were subjected to an array of tests in the lab including front and side impacts at velocities of two-, four-, six- and eight-metres per second.

Hockey Helmet

- A multi-impact helmet (can withstand multiple hits without needing to be replaced).
- Provides protection all around the head.
- Can be worn with face shields to protect the face.
- Enough room to safely wear a toque underneath.
- Came out on top as being the best to absorb an impact at velocities of two-, four- and six-meters per second.

Bike Helmet

- A single-impact helmet (it can only take one hit before needing to be replaced).
- Provides protection for the top of the head.
- There is no option for a protective face shield.
- The helmet needs to be worn next to the head; a toque cannot be worn underneath.
- Proved to be the best at absorbing impact at eight-metres per second.

Ski/Snowboarding Helmet

- A single-impact helmet (it can only take one hit before needing to be replaced).
- Provides good head protection for skiing and snowboarding.
- Does not have a protective face shield.
- These helmets are generally warm and can protect against frostbite.
- Superior for side impacts, but less protection than both the hockey and bike helmets for head on impacts.

It is important to remember that although helmets help mitigate the risk of injury, they cannot completely eliminate it. Children should be educated on safe tobogganing practices and always be accompanied by an adult.

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