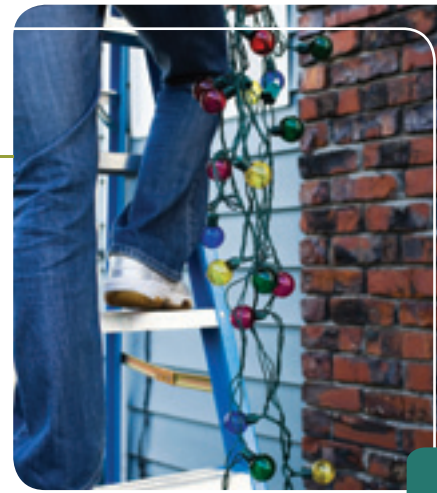


Fact Sheet:

About Holiday Safety

Unfortunately, common holiday activities can cause injuries that can make any festive season anything but jolly. That's why the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) advises taking proper precautions when participating in seasonal activities.



Based on data from the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), in 2004 alone, more than 49,100 luggage-related injuries and approximately 500,000 winter sports-related injuries (from activities such as ice hockey, ice skating, sledding, skiing, snowmobiling, snow boarding, snow tubing, and tobogganing) were treated in hospital emergency rooms, doctors' offices, and clinics. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 5,800 people were treated in emergency departments for fall-related injuries sustained while decorating during the 2002 holiday season.

The hectic pace of the holiday season may cause people to unknowingly let their guard down, making them more susceptible to bone, joint, and muscle-related injuries. Adults and children, whether at home or vacationing in cold-weather climates, can prevent injuries by being more cautious and celebrating in moderation. To ensure people celebrate the season safely, the AAOS recommends the following tips:

Avoid Painful Falls

- **Do not drink and decorate.** Save your celebratory drink for after the lights are up and illuminated.
- **Select the right ladder for the job.** When working at low and medium heights, choose step stools or utility ladders. Extension ladders are ideal for use outdoors to reach high places, as when hanging items from the rooftop. The weight the ladder is supporting should never exceed its maximum load capacity.
- **Inspect ladders for loose screws, hinges, or rungs that may not have been fixed from last use.** Clean off any mud or liquids that have accumulated on the ladder.
- **Properly set up the ladder on a firm, level surface.** Watch for soft, muddy spots or uneven flooring, and never place a ladder on ground that is uneven. Remember the 1-to-4 rule: the bottom of the ladder should be 1 foot away from the wall for every 4 feet that the ladder rises.
- **Be careful when putting up holiday decorations, including lights and trees.** Move materials with caution when on the ladder, and always position the ladder close to the work area, so you do not lose your balance and fall. Wear proper footwear with securely tied shoelaces.

- **Use a step stool** instead of furniture to stand on when you need a few more inches to hang a wreath or picture.
- **Be mindful of any rearranged furniture** and new decorations and make sure others in the house are familiar with the changes as well. Serious falls can happen when people trip over furniture placed in what used to be open space.
- **Ask for help** when moving heavy or awkward items.
- **Minimize clutter and keep pathways clear** of decorations, gift boxes, and other items that can trip you up.

Manage your holiday "haul"

- **Pack light** and use luggage with wheels when traveling.
- **Take care when placing luggage in an overhead compartment.** First, lift it onto the top of the seat. Then, with hands situated on the left and right sides of the suitcase, lift it up. If your luggage has wheels, make sure the wheel side is set in the compartment first. Once wheels are inside, put one hand on top of the luggage and push it to the back of the compartment. To remove the luggage, reverse this process.
- **Do not rush when lifting or carrying a suitcase or heavy package.** If a piece of luggage is too cumbersome when traveling, either check it or ask for help. At the mall, minimize heavy loads by making frequent trips to the car.
- **Always use proper lifting techniques.** When lifting, bend at your knees and lift with your leg muscles, not your back and waist. Avoid twisting or rotating your spine.

Stay in the Game This Winter

- **Wear appropriate protective gear,** including goggles, helmets, gloves, and padding. For warmth and protection when playing outside, wear several layers of light, loose, and water- and wind-resistant clothing. Layering allows you to accommodate your body's constantly changing temperature.
- **Warm up muscles** with light exercise for 10 minutes. Begin your lifting routines with manageable weights and do not overdo aerobic activities. Replenish fluids to prevent dehydration.

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- Know and abide by all rules of the winter sport in which you are participating. Make sure equipment is in good working order and used properly. When hitting the slopes, take a lesson (or several) from a qualified instructor. Learn how to fall correctly to reduce the risk of injury.
- Seek shelter and medical attention immediately if you or anyone with you is experiencing hypothermia or frostbite when in the cold.

Avoid Snow and Ice Injuries

- Speak with your physician before clearing the driveway and sidewalk of snow if you have heart or vascular conditions. Do this regardless of whether you use a shovel or snow blower.
- Never stick your hands in the snow blower. If snow becomes too impacted, stop the engine and wait more than 5 seconds. Use a solid object to clear wet snow or debris from the chute. Beware of the recoil of the motor and blades after the machine has been turned off.
- Warm up your muscles for 10 minutes with light exercise and take frequent breaks. Shoveling snow is comparable to weight lifting. Replenish fluids to prevent dehydration.
- Clear snow early and often. Begin when a light covering of snow is on the ground to avoid shoveling packed, heavy snow. Do not throw the snow over your shoulder or to the side. This requires a twisting motion that places stress on your back.
- Wear proper footwear and look in front of you. Ice can cause sudden and serious falls. If you find yourself falling, try to fall on your side or buttocks. Roll over naturally, turning your head in the direction of the roll.
- Drive cautiously. Allow plenty of time to brake as you approach stop signs and red lights, and reduce speed in hazardous conditions.

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