

Safety, Health & Fitness—

Teen Charged with Ski Death—

A 16-year-old snowboarder was charged with manslaughter February 25, 2005 following a fatal collision with a 28-year-old woman at Jackson Hole Mountain Resort.

The crash occurred just after 11 AM on February 24, 2005 near the bottom of Laramie Bowl, an intermediate run on the upper part of Rendezvous Mountain.

The snowboarder was moving very fast and hit the woman, who was skiing slowly. Witnesses said that the snowboarder made no attempt to avoid the skier even though there was ample room to do so.

The woman, who was not wearing a helmet, immediately lost consciousness. She suffered numerous internal injuries, and a significant head injury which was cited as the preliminary cause of death.

The snowboarder, who was wearing a helmet, had only minor injuries. He was charged with manslaughter under Section B of the state statute for "involuntarily but recklessly" killing someone.

He was also charged with reckless endangerment. The manslaughter charge carries a maximum penalty of 20 years imprisonment. Endangerment carries a maximum one-year jail pen

Preventing Colds

Cold and flu season is upon us. Adults average two to four colds each year, and kids three times as many. With most colds hitting in winter, that can mean a lot of missed ski days.

The key to minimizing colds is to boost your immune system. Your immune system is what protects your body against antigens. The white blood cells are at the core of the immune system, and these include T cells, B cells and natural killer cells, all of which attack invaders using various techniques.

A strong immune system is especially important for skiers because the sport is so physically demanding. This added stress may put your body under more strain than you realize, especially if you ski only a few days each year or, at the other end of the spectrum, if you hit the slopes every week. Also, the effectiveness of your immune system decreases with age, so if you want to ski into your golden years, you'll need to be extra vigilant. The strength of your immune system is in part genetically determined, but you can always give it a boost.

Here are some proven tips for strengthening your immune system this winter.

Get plenty of sleep.

First and foremost, you need sleep. When you're sleeping, your immune system is rebuilding itself. Partial sleep deprivation, such as one night of lost sleep, reduces the number of natural killer cells and suppresses their activity. While individual needs vary, most of us require 8 to 8 1/2 hours per night. If you're not sure how much sleep is best for you, simply listen to how you feel. When you're not feeling good or performing well, you're probably not getting enough sleep. If you skimp on sleep when you're on a ski vacation, know that sleep deprivation happens quickly. Trimming even an hour or two off your ideal amount of sleep for a couple of days can weaken the immune system.

Eat Garlic

Garlic is loaded with antiviral and antibacterial properties to fight off colds and flu and has been found to stimulate T cell activity. Some experts say that cooked garlic and supplements are OK, but that the raw stuff is better. When you feel a cold coming on mix a couple of garlic cloves and a few stalks of celery in the blender and drinking it like a juice.

Reduce Stress

A number of studies indicate stress is the chief enemy to a strong immune system. When the body is under stress, it releases a hormone called cortisol, which raises your heart rate and blood pressure. Over time, this can wear down the immune system by decreasing the effectiveness of natural killer cells and T cells. Fortunately, it's easy to reverse the pattern by learning to relax. In studies done on people who were sick or undergoing surgical procedures, relaxation techniques helped speed their recovery, cut days off their hospital stay and reduced the amount of painkillers needed.

Think Positive

A positive attitude is as important to having a strong immune system as sleep, exercise and diet. There's a well-established understanding in the field of mind/body medicine that what you think and how you feel affects your health and immune system. This may be because pessimists are more likely than optimists to experience events as stressful

Exercise

Studies indicate that regular, moderate exercise increases immune function, making you less susceptible to colds and even certain kinds of cancer. Exercise works by increasing the number of natural killer cells in the blood. Your killer-cell count usually returns to normal after exercise. But if you make working out a habit, over time you can actually increase your resting level of killer cells, which will help keep you healthy. On the flip side, there's evidence that if you exercise too hard (if you compete in a marathon, for example), your immune system can be depressed. Moderation is key. Get 30 to 45 minutes of exercise three to five times per week.

Eat Smart

A healthy diet is vital for a strong immune system. At the top of the list of immune-supporting nutrients is protein, which helps replenish white blood cells. Aim to include some protein in each of your meals. It's also wise to limit sugary and fatty foods, such as cookies and chips, as these can contribute to the formation of free radicals-unstable molecules that damage cell structure and can lead to illness. To reduce your fat and sugar intake, eat more whole foods, such as fish, vegetables, nuts and whole grains. Some experts also recommend taking a daily antioxidant supplement with vitamins A and C and selenium to fight free radicals and stay healthy.

Bouncing Back

If despite your best efforts, a bug breaks through your defenses, here's how to tell whether you're ready to return to the slopes.

- * Use the "Neck Rule": If symptoms are below the neck-wheezing, mucus-producing coughs, nausea, body aches-you need more recovery time. But if you're without a fever and only have symptoms from the neck up, like scratchy throat, runny nose and sneezing, you're probably ready for moderate activity. Regardless of your symptoms, don't rush back into strenuous exercise. Once you're feeling better, take three days for every day you were sick to return to your previous intensity.
- * Exercise, cold and dry air can trigger coughing spasms. When skiing, try to breathe through your nose to warm and moisturize incoming air.
- * Stay hydrated. It helps clear the lungs and also helps eliminate virus particles through frequent urination.
- * Take multivitamins and temporary high doses (1,000-2,000 milligrams) of vitamin C. Consider herbal "cold buster" remedies such as echinacea, which can increase the production of immunity-boosting T cells.

Snowbird's New Avalanche Awareness Center

Snowbird, Utah (Ski Press)-North America's first fully automated avalanche rescue training facility simulating single and multiple buried avalanche victims opened this past December in Little Cottonwood Canyon.

The Rescue Training Center, which opened Thursday, December 9, 2004, is free to the public throughout the winter. It is located on Snowbird Ski & Summer Resort property near Wasatch Powderbird Guides and includes a control panel and buried transmitters to simulate avalanche victims. Users will select the number of "victims" for their practice session at the control panel and then receive computer-generated feedback at the completion of their search.

Wasatch Backcountry Rescue installed a similar avalanche training facility December 16, 2004 near The Canyons. WBR's annual fund-raiser was held at Park City's Club Suede Saturday, December 18.

For more information visit www.wasatchbackcountryrescue.org.