

Safety, Health & Fitness—

The Helmet Debate Continues—

Just a few years ago, a non-racer wearing a helmet on the slopes was about as rare as a snowboarder in Taos. Today, helmeted skiers can be seen at every resort in the world. Helmet sales are doubling every year, with more than 500,000 sold in 2004.

But even with helmets flying off store shelves, the percentage of skiers and boarders wearing helmets remains small. The estimates are around 5%. For many non-helmeted snowsliders the question remains: Is the risk of head injury high enough to warrant wearing a helmet?

Ski-industry officials have long been preaching the message that skiing is relatively safe. The odds of death or serious injury from skiing or boarding are less than two in a million, according to the National Ski Areas Association.

However, snowsliding still puts your head at risk. Each year, about 15,000 skiers / boarders leave the slopes with head injuries [any damage from the neck up], which account for 14% of all snowsliding injuries.

The risk may be higher for some. If you're an experienced male slider between the ages of 15 and 30 who likes to cruise near the edges of intermediate trails, watch out. Statistics suggest that this demographic group, known for high-risk behavior, takes more than 70% of on-slope knocks to the head.

When head banging occurs, helmets can do a lot to lessen the damage. It is estimated that nearly half of the injuries studied occurred to an area of the head that would have been protected if the victim had been wearing a helmet.

But wearing a helmet can have the opposite effect, giving sliders a false sense of security and causing them to ride more recklessly. Another concern has been the increased possibility of a neck injury, especially for kids.

Some people are convinced that helmets dramatically reduced the severity of injury. But there are situations in which a helmet won't make a difference. For instance, if you go headfirst into a tree at 20 mph, a helmet isn't going to help.

The bottom line is that wearing a helmet is a personal choice but there really is no compelling reason why you shouldn't wear one.

French Skiing Ups The Safety Message—

The French sports ministry will post some 20,000 posters and distribute 150,000 postcards at the country's 76 leading ski areas this winter warning skiers and boarders to watch their speed and give way to others traveling downhill of you.

The campaign aims to cut the number of deaths and injuries on French ski slopes which last season amounted to 54 fatalities.

Combat Altitude Sickness—

Few people realize the stress altitude puts on your stomach. Adjusting your diet to higher altitude will help keep energy levels up and can also help fend off altitude sickness.

Water is the first step to winning this battle, because breathing at altitude expends more moisture than breathing at sea level.

Your metabolic rate speeds up to increase your oxygen intake, and so you need more fuel to maintain the faster pace.

Carbohydrates are the key to sustaining your energy levels at elevation, because you burn carbs instead of fats in order to dissolve more oxygen into the bloodstream.

Snack Food for the Slopes—

When it comes to packing snacks for the slopes, it's tough to beat bars for ease and convenience. Here's a look at what you'll get.

BAR	Calories	Carbs	Fat	Protein
Balance, Yogurt Honey Peanut [sweet, but a bit chalky]	200	22 gms	6 gms	14 gms
Clif Bar, Crunchy Peanut Butter [like chewy granola]	240	39 gms	5 gms	12 gms
Luna, Chai Tea [a favorite — tastes like the real thing]	180	27 gms	4 gms	10 gms
Nature Valley Cruchy Granola Bar, Peanut Butter [sweet & crisp]	180	29 gms	6 gms	5 gms
Powerbar, Apple Cinnamon [tasty, bit if cold, could break a tooth]	230	45 gms	2.5 gms	10 gms
Snickers [yum]	280	35 gms	14 gms	4 gms
Twinlab Ironman, Cookie Dough [almost like real cookie dough]	230	25 gms	7 gms	16 gms