



Ice Safety

Winter weather has arrived in southwest Michigan, bringing many opportunities for frozen fun with the family.

"Activities on the ice such as skating and hockey are great ways to keep your kids moving during the colder months," says Dr. Lia Gaginno, pediatrician at Bronson Rambling Road Pediatrics Oshtemo. "However, being on the ice presents certain safety risks. It is important for parents to be aware of these risks so they can take precautions to protect their children."

Before you lace up your skates, consider these tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics to prevent injuries while on the ice:

Use Appropriate Equipment:

- Have your child wear a helmet to prevent serious head injuries, such as a concussion.
- Encourage your child to wear knee pads and elbow pads, especially while learning to skate.
- Wear skates that fit properly. If skates are too tight, they can cause blisters or restrict circulation and result in frostbite.

Choose Ice Wisely

- Allow children to skate only on approved surfaces. If you choose to skate on a frozen body of water instead of at a rink, check for signs posted by local police or recreation departments indicating the ice is safe to walk on.
- Check the ice for bumps, debris or divots that can cause falls and other injuries.
- Warn children about the dangers of thin ice. According to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, a minimum of four inches of clear ice is needed to support an average person's weight. However, ice does not always form at a uniform rate, so it is important to check the thickness with an ice spud and ruler every few steps. Minimum ice thickness guidelines can be found [here](#).
- The safest place to skate is at an ice rink.

Follow the Rules

- Encourage your children to skate in the same direction as the crowd and avoid darting across the ice.
- When playing hockey or other similar activities, do not allow overly aggressive behavior such as body checking. According to a study in the Journal of the American Medical Association, body checking is related to 46 percent of all minor injuries in youth ice hockey, and 75 percent of major injuries.

Stay Warm

- Dress your child in layers and wear clothing made of material that dries quickly.
- Set time limits on outdoor play to prevent hypothermia and frostbite. Have children come inside periodically to warm up.
- Know the signs of hypothermia. "Your child may shiver, become tired and have slurred speech as hypothermia sets in," says Dr. Gaginno. "If you think your child is hypothermic, call 911 right away."

Sources:

American Academy of Pediatrics "Ice Hockey" <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/sports/Pages/Ice-Hockey.aspx> "Tips to Keep Kids Warm All Winter" <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-play/Pages/Winter-Safety.aspx> "Figure Skating" <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/sports/Pages/Figure-Skating.aspx>
Journal of American Medical Association "Risk of Injury Associated with Body Checking Among Youth Ice Hockey Players" <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/186037>

This article is brought to you by Bronson Children's Hospital, southwest Michigan's only children's hospital. For more information about children's health, visit bronsonhealth.com/services/children.