

# EXPERT OPINION

PROFESSIONAL ADVICE ON YOUR HEALTH, BEAUTY AND WELLBEING

## SKI TO SAFETY

**Before you take to the slopes, The Knee Clinic at Nuffield Health has this advice to help you avoid injury...**

**WITH THE SKIING** season almost upon us, many of you will be looking forward to a long anticipated holiday on the slopes. Sadly, the onset of the ski season heralds a steady stream of skiers returning home with knee injuries, some of which will be significant.

Paul Gibb has treated hundreds of patients with skiing knee injuries during the past 20 years, many of whom are treated in The Knee Clinic ([www.kneesurgeryclinic.co.uk](http://www.kneesurgeryclinic.co.uk)) that he has developed in Tunbridge Wells, based at the Nuffield Hospital.

You may be surprised to learn that many knee ligament injuries occur whilst skiers are travelling at relatively low speed, often in the mêlée associated with alighting from chair lifts, or on piste when skiers turn awkwardly after traversing or avoiding other skiers. Fatigue seems to



increase the likelihood of injury and failure of bindings to release is almost always associated with ligament sprains and ruptures. Wipe outs occurring at speed will normally release bindings but can be associated with very serious knee injuries, including dislocations and fractures.

The hallmark of significant knee injury is a pop or tearing sensation associated with pain and the rapid subsequent development of swelling and stiffness, with many injured skiers requiring assistance to leave the piste. Most of these will have sprained or ruptured the anterior cruciate ligament and this injury should always be suspected when a knee swells soon after injury. Doctors working in ski resorts are expert at diagnosing knee ligament injuries and will usually provide crutches, splints and protection

against thrombosis, pending your return home for further investigation, including MRI scanning, and treatment.

There are a number of things that you can do to reduce the risk of knee injury whilst skiing. Firstly, before travelling, do what you can to improve your fitness, if necessary enrolling in a gymnasium or undertaking exercise classes. Your physiotherapist will be able to give you advice on postural exercise and the development of core musculature, and will also advise on agility and balance-related exercises which will improve your postural control whilst skiing. When skiing ensure that modern equipment is used and that bindings are properly adjusted. Ski well within your ability and avoid skiing when tired or fatigued. Always take particular care when alighting from chair or drag lifts and when pistes are very busy.

**If you should be unfortunate enough to injure your knee, seek medical advice early and try and organise MRI scanning if appropriate as soon as you return home. The Knee Clinic can be contacted at the Nuffield Hospital on 01892 546 111, or email [admin@kneesurgeryclinic.co.uk](mailto:admin@kneesurgeryclinic.co.uk)**



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