February 2010

British Chiropractic Association

Ski Safely This Season

With the Winter Olympics taking place this month many will be inspired to take to the slopes, but beware of day three! According to the British Chiropractic Association (BCA), skiers are most likely to injure themselves at 4pm on the third day of a skiing holiday.

Despite common assumptions that a ski injury is most likely to occur on the first day Matthew Bennett, BCA Chiropractor and the first to work with the British Alpine Ski team, comments: "After three days of skiing using unaccustomed muscles, skiers become confident but are physically tired, and their capability isn't necessarily matched to their confidence".

So, if like hundreds of Brits you are skiing this season, the BCA has provided the following tips to ensure you can stay safe on the slopes:

Pre-Ski fitness tips:

- **Don't just sit there** - Exercising through squats, sit ups and cycling is also good to tease the right muscles.
- **It's a balancing act** - Balance is the single most important factor in skiing. Use a wobble board to improve balance and build up ankle muscles. For a thorough ankle work-out, rocking heel to toe is good for snowboarders and left to right is best for skiers.
- **Jump around** - Use a mini trampoline to work all those 'skiing' muscles**.**
- **Roll with it** – Roller blading is perfect practice and will help you develop a good ski posture, so you look like a pro on the slopes.
- **Check it out** - Most skiers find turning one way easier than the other. Poor technique might not be the problem – muscle weakness and joint alignment could be. Visit a chiropractor to sort out any misalignments and improve performance.

Out on the slopes :

- **Hot and Cold** - Warm up before strenuous skiing. Start off gently rather than heading first for the black runs and round the day off with a stretch.
- **Take plenty of breaks** - Overexertion will ruin your holiday – moderate the length of skiing time and listen to your body. Pain is a warning sign, don't ignore it.
- **Liquid lunch** - Drink plenty of water and isotonic drinks to avoid dehydration and stay clear of alcohol, tea and coffee.
- **Wrap up** - Make sure clothing is warm and adequate for the cold weather and don't forget hat and gloves.
- **Put the boot in** - No matter how many lessons, skiers won't improve without the right boots and this is where most skiers put their first foot wrong. Skiers often choose on comfort alone – don't make this mistake. Get a moulded footbed from the ski shop first as this improves fit, comfort and ski control. Opt for a shop with a wide range of boots so you are spoilt for choice.

- **What a bind** – If you are prone to going 'knock-kneed' when you ski, look out for lateral alignment. Wedges expertly placed under the binding can make a huge difference.
- **Carry on** - Always be careful when carrying skis/boards. Leave them standing upright so you don't have to bend to pick them up. Carry them over your shoulder, swapping shoulders regularly.
- **Ice is nice** - With an acute injury, use ice rather than heat.
- **Tread carefully** – A great deal of people are injured by slipping on ice at the ski resort, not just on the slopes. Wear shoes with a deep treaded sole and use strap-on studs for ski boots to help keep you upright.

It still holds true that it is always better to take preventive measures in order to reduce the risks of injuries. Take note of these guidelines to ensure you keep on the ski safe side this ski season. Matthew adds: "Prevention is still better than cure and these tips can help you avoid injuries because just one joint or muscle out of line can be a disaster when you are travelling at 40 miles per hour on two skis".

Skiers can call the BCA on 0118 950 5950 to find their nearest chiropractor or visit www.chiropractic-uk.co.uk.

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Notes to editors

Matthew's patients have included world-class skiers such as Chemmy Alcott and he has worked with the British Alpine Ski Team which included Alain Baxter and Emma Carrick Anderson under the leadership of Technical Director, Graham Bell

About the British Chiropractic Association:

Chiropractic is a primary health-care profession that specialises in the diagnosis, treatment and overall management of conditions that are due to problems with the joints, ligaments, tendons and nerves of the body, particularly those of the spine.

*The **BCA** represents well over 50% of UK chiropractors. Chiropractic is a statutorily regulated healthcare profession regulated by the General Chiropractic Council. Members of the BCA must abide by the GCC's Code of Conduct and Standard of Proficiency. The association only accepts graduates who have gone through a minimum four-year full-time internationally accredited degree course at an internationally recognised college of chiropractic education. Chiropractic care offers hands on pain management and focuses on muscles, joints and nerves. Chiropractic is suitable for all ages and can help with a wide range of aches and pains from head to toe. Chiropractors use their hands to 'adjust' or 'manipulate' the spine and joints where signs of restriction in movement are found and can also involve working on muscles. This restores normal function to the affected muscles, joints and nerves allowing the body to then get on with the job of healing itself.*