

# Dr. Colin Gage

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*"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"*

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## Hit the Ski Slopes –Gently!

Not only is it the holiday season, but the time for skiing and snowboarding is here. Therefore, I am anticipating the annual rush of people calling the office with acute injuries after their first few days of being on the slopes.

The two main causes of injuries are falls and collisions. There have been many studies done on skiing/snowboarding accidents. The following are a few of the findings:

- The number of injuries in skiing versus snowboarding is about equal, usually five injuries per one thousand visits to the slopes.
- Snowboarders tend to receive more injuries to their arms, two and a half times more than skiers. They also incur more ankle injuries than skiers.
- Snowboarding injuries were usually minor in nature, for example, sprains, strains, fractures, and bruises. The more serious injuries are usually due to blunt trauma to the head or internal organs, such as from hitting a tree.
- One of the most common but painful injuries from snowboarding is a bruised or fractured tailbone. This injury really hurts and can prevent you from sitting properly for weeks.
- Skiers are at greater risk of more severe spinal and knee injuries. It has been found that knee injuries are not as common in snowboarders.
- Skiers commonly sprain or fracture their thumbs. This is due to falling while holding onto a ski pole. Thumb injuries are almost non-existent in snow boarders.
- Separated shoulders are more common in snowboarders. This is due to a person falling backwards and reaching behind him or herself to catch their fall.
- Deaths was comparable among the two sports. Skiers most often die of blunt trauma to the head or vital organs. Snowboarder deaths are usually due to submersion in tree wells (for example, they fall head first into the area around the tree base, and are unable to get out, as their bindings don't release easily).

Preparing for the ski season by exercising properly is the best way to prevent a lot of ski injuries:

- Snowboarders need to strengthen their upper extremities, like their shoulders and arms. The stronger your arms and shoulders are, the better you can catch yourself while falling.

-Skiers need to strengthen their lower extremities, specifically the front and back (hamstrings and quadriceps) of the upper legs. The weaker the legs become as the day of skiing progresses, the more you are unable to absorb the bumps and the more pressure is put on the lower back.

-Participants in both sports should strengthen their core trunk muscles (abdominals, lower back, and upper back)

-Work hard at maintaining good flexibility in the shoulders, neck, back, and legs. If your muscles will not stretch as you fall, injuries will result.

Most injuries occur during the first and last run of the day. Start easy and finish easy. Don't try that double black diamond run at the end of the day! See your chiropractor *before* you go skiing so that the joints in your spine have as much mobility as possible before you go out and stress them. For specific exercises and stretches that will help prevent injuries on the ski hill, ask your chiropractor. Remember, prevention is a lot easier than trying to heal an injury after the damage is done.