

Hit the slopes

Enjoy your time on the slopes more by taking a few steps beforehand to prevent injuries

By LAURA ANDREWS

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It's time to hit the ski slopes, and the Midwest and other parts of the country already have plenty of snow for it.

Before you take on the bunny hill or black diamond though it's important to keep in mind these tips to prevent injuries.

"The best thing is to get a qualified lesson," said Matt Curtis, a skier and owner of Wayne's Ski & Cycle in Mason City. "That really helps reduce injuries."

Most injuries occur because a person doesn't take a lesson, therefore, doesn't know what they're doing, said Tim Penkhus, ski school director at Mount Kato, Mankato, Minn. Before a lesson, though, you need the right equipment.

The boots, skis and poles all need to be the correct size. Otherwise everything will be hard to control, Curtis said.

It's especially important to have the ski bindings, the part that latches the boots to the skis, adjusted by someone who knows what they're doing.

"A lot of people try to adjust it themselves," Curtis said. "It's a good way to blow out an ACL and have an expensive doctor's bill. A minor adjustment can help save a costly injury."

Bindings are important because they cause the skis to automatically release from the boots if put in an awkward position that might result in an injury.

He suggests bindings, boots and all other equipment be checked once a year. "Boots can also go out of date and be unsafe to use," Curtis said.

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— Matt Curtis,
owner of Wayne's
Ski & Cycle in
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Where to go

Can't make it to the Rocky Mountains for skiing? Here are a few places not too far from North Iowa.

* Mount Kato, 20461 Highway 66, Mankato, Minn. Visit <http://www.mountkato.com/> for more information.

* Seven Oaks, 1086 222nd Drive, Boone, Iowa. Visit <http://www.sevenoaksrec.com/> for more information.

* Sundown Mountain Resort, 16991 Asbury Road, Dubuque, Iowa. Visit <http://www.sundownmtn.com/> for more information.

* Mount Crescent Ski Area (northeast of Council Bluffs), 17034 Snowhill Lane, Honey Creek, IA 51542. Visit <http://www.skicrescent.com/> for more information.

* Nor-Ski Runs, Decorah, Iowa.

* Riverside Hills, Estherville, Iowa

* Sleepy Hollow Sports Park, 4051 Dean Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa. Visit <http://www.sleepyhollowsportsark.com/> for more information.

* Afton Alps Ski Area (near the Twin Cities), 6600 Peller Ave S., Hastings, Minn. Visit www.aftonalps.com for more information.

* Buck Hill, 15400 Buck Hill Road, Burnsville, Minn. Visit www.buckhill.com for more information.

* Hyland Hills Ski Area, 8800 Chalet Road, Bloomington, Minn. Visit www.hylandski.com for more information.

* Welch Village, US-61 off Highway 7, Welch, Minn. Visit www.welchvillage.com for more information.

* Coffee Mill Ski Area, 99 Coulee Way, Wabasha, Minn. Visit www.coffeemillski.com for more information.

* Mount La Crosse Ski Area, W5549 Old Town Hall Road, La Crosse, Wis. Visit www.mtlacrosse.com for more information.

* Como Park Ski Center, 1431 N. Lexington Pkwy., St. Paul, Minn.

* Powder Ridge Winter Recreation Center (Twin Cities metro area), Powder Ridge Road, Kimball, Minn. Visit <http://www.powderridge.com/> for more information.

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