

## Ski without worry

Paris, December 6<sup>th</sup> 2005

### *10 safety tips from an expert to head for the mountains*

Of the 8.5 million French who practice winter sports, 80% are occasional sports persons. Whatever the sport - downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, snowboarding or snow hiking - mountain enthusiasts wish to get the most out of their stay, in complete safety. Doctor Guy Bellaïche, Medical Director of Mondial Assistance Group, reminds us of the precautions to be taken to ensure that skiing remains a pleasant experience.

**Prepare yourself physically** – Doing around 6 hours of exercise every day for a week, in unusual climatic conditions, does require a minimum level of preparation. In the weeks before your departure, remember to prepare your muscles and improve your endurance through regular sports activity, focused on the lower limbs muscles (thighs, calves): walking, jogging, cycling and roller skating are pleasant activities which are easy to practice. At the beginning of your trip, avoid intense effort for the first 48 hours. This is the length of time that the body of a healthy individual needs to adapt to altitude.

People who suffer from heart or respiratory conditions, should not forget to consult their doctor before departing; they should also avoid high altitude resorts.

**Choose suitable equipment** for your body shape and skiing level – Many knee sprains are due to unsuitable and badly fitted equipment and in particular to badly adjusted bindings. To avoid your skis from coming free or not being able to take them off at all, it is essential for bindings to be adjusted by a competent person.

**Do not overdo yourself** – Begin your stay, and each day during it, with easy runs. Do not hesitate to take a break and stop at mountain top restaurants, or simply admire the scenery, and always carry cereal bars or dried fruit in case you have a « little craving ». It is essential to drink, to keep your body hydrated. Water remains the best liquid in these circumstances and it is recommended to regularly take in small quantities. You should also plan to have a less « intense » day in the middle of the week.

**Children: have them wear a helmet** – The risk of accidents is twice as high for children under 11. This is why wearing a helmet is of vital importance: less conscious of risk than their elders, children are more vulnerable to head injuries in the event of a shock. The risk of lesion is reduced by half when a helmet is worn.

**Know the weather forecast** – Serious traumas affecting skiers are above all due to weather conditions and the condition of the snow. By consulting weather reports, it will be easier for you to adapt your style of skiing and your clothing.

**Protect yourself against both the cold and sun** – Burns caused by the sun are just as dangerous in the mountains as on the beach. Even in misty or slightly overcast weather, effective skin protection involves regularly reapplying protective face cream and wearing anti ultra-violet glasses, preferably with covering frames. The reflection from the sun's rays between the snow and the clouds corresponds to intense radiance the importance of which is not generally acknowledged.

**Respect the signage on runs** – Respect the signage panels on runs, just as you would on the road. They will inform you about the difficulty and condition of runs.

**Respect fellow skiers** – One accident in five is due to a collision with another person or an obstacle. In order for mountains to remain an area of shared fun, always give priority to the downstream skier, anticipate your path and control your speed.

« **Protect, alert, assist** » - In the mountains as elsewhere, respect these three basic first aid principles. If you witness an accident, begin by protecting the victim (and yourself) from all danger, notably by signalling their presence upstream, then alert safety teams before giving assistance. Cover the victim so that they do not get cold and reassure them while waiting for the arrival of safety teams.

**An appropriate assistance solution** – Despite all the precautions taken by skiers, and their prudent behaviour, anybody can be victim of an accident. This is why taking out an assistance contract, for a modest fee, makes it possible to simplify life and have an enjoyable trip!

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