

# Life on the Slopes has its Ups and Downs: Snowboarding Injuries and Prevention

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Snowboarding has become increasingly more popular in the past ten years. Those who are new to the sport are more likely to suffer an injury due to their lack of balance when first learning the techniques of snowboarding. Injuries caused by snowboarding may vary from simple bumps and bruises to the more complex sprains, fractures, and dislocations. Common snowboarding injuries consist of wrist fractures and/or sprains (caused when a snowboarder attempts to break a fall with his/her hands) and ankle sprains or fractures (caused by soft shell boots which allow more motion, but less stability at the ankle). Wearing protective equipment such as wrist guards, helmets, kneepads, and elbow pads can help to prevent injury. Snowboarders should also maintain their physical conditions and strength through proper stretching and exercise.

The following are stretches to maintain flexibility necessary for snowboarding:  
(stretches should be held for a minimum of 20-30 seconds)

## **Quad Stretch (front of thigh)**

Stand with one hand holding onto the back of a chair for balance. With the other hand, reach behind and grab the foot of the leg you want to stretch and bring it up towards your buttocks. You should feel a stretch in the front of your thigh.

## **Hamstring Stretch (back of thigh)**

Place the foot of the leg you want to stretch on a chair or stool. Lean forward and slowly reach towards your toes until you feel a stretch in the back of your thigh.

## **Calf Stretch**

Stand 2-3 feet away from the wall. Put your hands against the wall at about shoulder level to support your weight. Bring one foot slightly in front of the other. While keeping the back leg straight, bend the front leg at the knee as you lean towards the wall. Do not bend at the waist and try to keep your back heel on the ground as you lean forward. You should feel a stretch in the calf of the back leg.

The following are exercises for muscle groups that are used while snowboarding:

## **Aerobic Exercise**

It is important to maintain overall physical endurance to prevent injuries secondary to fatigue. Aerobic exercise such as walking, jogging, or bicycling should be done for 20-30 minutes at least three times a week.

## **Squats**

Squats are a good exercise for the muscles in the legs that are used while snowboarding. Start from a standing position with feet shoulder width apart. Bend at the hips, knees, and ankles until your thighs are parallel to the floor, then return to standing. Perform 3 sets of 10 repetitions.

## **Toe Raises**

Calf strength is important in snowboarding for performing turns and providing balance. Calf raises can be done by standing on the floor or on a stool for increased difficulty. You simply raise yourself up onto your toes and slowly lower yourself back down. Perform 3 sets of 10 repetitions.

Snowboarding season is here, so be smart and prepare yourself mentally and physically for your trip down the slope. Follow these simple stretches and exercises and reduce your risk of injury.