



Rollerblade With Care

The idea is so simple it's a wonder nobody came up with it sooner. Instead of making roller skates that have a wheel at each corner, like a car, why not line up all four wheels in a line? The result was "in-line" skates, also commonly known as "rollerblading."

"In-line" skates (that's generic name for the product) work much the same way as an ice skate, with the wheels replacing the blade. The skates offer a tremendous aerobic workout, involving all major muscle groups.

However, because the activity is so new, involves speed, and is practiced on hard surfaces, mishaps can occur.

Before you get rolling, read on to learn about the most important safety considerations.

- Always wear full protective gear: C.S.A. approved helmet, knee and elbow pads, wrist guards, and safety gloves. This holds true for all ages. If children see their parents ignoring the safety rules, they're less likely to take those rules seriously.
- Don't buy cheap skates. You don't have to spend hundreds of dollars, but lower prices often mean inferior quality, which increases the risk of injury. It may be difficult to find replacement parts.
- Make sure the skates are snug but not uncomfortable. Like ice skates, they should be laced up or buckled tightly to provide maximum ankle support.
- Ensure that all free-moving parts of the skate are secure and functioning properly, and that the brake stopper is in good condition. If not, make the necessary adjustments or replacements before skating.
- Have someone watch you the first time you get on the skates. They can help you keep your balance, and make sure you don't go gliding into trouble.
- Skate on flat, dry surfaces, free of dangers like potholes, loose gravel or rocks. Watch for pedestrians, cyclists and traffic. For your first few times out, try an empty playground or quiet residential street to get comfortable.
- Switching the wheels around occasionally will make the wheels last longer and maintain performance. When the wheels don't turn smoothly, check the bearings and replace them if necessary.
- Warm up and cool down, as you would with any exercise, to avoid stiff and sore muscles. Just like ice skating, the activity can be strenuous - but at least the weather is warmer!

Information adapted from the 'Summer Sports Information Kit' developed from the Ontario Sports and Recreation Center.