

:: Shoveling Snow ::

Since the winter season is upon us and snow has already fallen in many areas, it's a good time to review some safety tips to make an otherwise tedious and strenuous job injury free. Since even many of those who have snow blowers may have to shovel snow periodically, this information is useful.

Safety tips for shoveling snow

- Take time to warm up your muscles before shoveling by doing some stretching exercises or marching in place.
- Shovel often. Newly fallen snow is lighter than heavily-packed snow.
- Instead of lifting snow, push it—it's much easier on your back and arms.

When lifting snow

- Bend at the knees, not the waist, and keep your stomach tight.
- Use your entire body, letting the back and legs share the work.
- Keep your hands apart; this will give you better leverage.
- Take small, frequent scoops instead of large ones.
- Walk to where you want to put the snow instead of throwing it.
- Don't throw snow over your shoulder or to the side (this causes twisting).
- Pace yourself and take a break when you feel tired or out of breath.
- Don't smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol while shoveling snow (doing this places extra stress on your heart).
- Stand with your feet about hip width apart for balance; keep the shovel close to your body.
- Pick a shovel that is the right size for you. A smaller blade requires you to lift less snow, thereby putting less stress on the body.
- Use a light-weight shovel that's easy to handle (such as plastic or aluminum with a Teflon coating).
- Avoid twisting movements. If you need to move the snow to one side, reposition your feet to face the direction the snow will be going.
- If you feel pain while shoveling, stop—listen to your body!

Who may be at risk when shoveling snow

- Someone who has already had a heart attack.
- People who have a history of heart disease.

- Persons with high blood pressure or high cholesterol levels.
- Individuals who smoke.
- Someone who leads a sedentary lifestyle.

Some exercises you can do before shoveling

Shoulder Shrug – Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and let your arms hang at your sides. Raise your shoulders as if shrugging and then relax. Do this 10 times.

Chest Stretch – Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and move your arms straight in front of you while making a relaxed fist. Move both arms straight back until your fists are even with your chest. Do this 10 times.

Back Stretch – Stand with your hands on your hips. Lean back slowly until you feel your back stretching and then go back to the starting position. Do this five times.

Shoveling snow can be safe and injury-free if you warm up your muscles first, ensure you have the right shovel and do the work safely.

If you would like more information about shoveling snow safely, contact the Bureau of Workers' Compensation Health & Safety Division at:

717-772-1635