



SHIFT BRIEFING



SNOW SHOVELING BEST PRACTICES

Shoveling snow is a lot of work, and it is easy to injure yourself if you are not using the right technique. On average 1,200 people per year die as a result of shoveling snow. Add back injuries, shoulder dislocation, heart attacks, and snow shoveling is one of the most dangerous activities people can attempt.

"Warming up" is not about body temperature, but is a way of using slow, gentle exercise to increase blood flow and flexibility to the muscles and joints that will be used. Snow shoveling can be a good exercise when performed correctly and with safety in mind.

Tips for Safe Snow Shoveling

- Dress appropriately. Wearing layers will allow you to adjust to the temperature outside. Be sure to dress warmly enough and cover your head, face, and hands when outside for prolonged periods. If you become overheated, take a break from shoveling.
- Pick the right waterproof boots. They will want to protect their feet from the cold as well as keep them dry. Wear non-skid boots to guard against falls on slick snow or hidden ice.
- Pick a small shovel. Depending on how wet the snow is; a shovel full of snow can weigh up to 15 pounds! Selecting a smaller shovel means lighter loads of snow which can help prevent injury to the body by creating less strain. An ergonomic snow shovel with a curved handle or an adjustable handle length will minimize painful bending. Use a silicone lubricant on the shovel. This will help the snow slide off easier.
- Stay hydrated. Water plays an important role when people exercise, even in winter. Carry a water bottle and take a few sips after every 15 minutes of shoveling snow.
- Shovel frequently. Shovel every time the snowfall is about 2 inches. This will help lessen the load and make snow shoveling more manageable. In deep snow, remove a few inches at a time, rather than attempting to shovel the full depth at once
- Lift with the legs, not the back. Make sure that your knees are bending and straightening to lift the shovel instead of leaning forward and straightening with the back. Legs have strong muscle groups that can do the work! Avoid twisting to move snow to its new location – pivot your whole body to face the new direction
- Push the snow. It's easier to push the shovel full of snow instead of lifting and throwing the snow.
- Separate the hands on the shovel. By creating space between your hands, you can increase your leverage on the shovel to make it easier. Keep your hands about 12 inches apart to provide greater stability and minimize the chances of injuring your lower back.
- Avoid caffeine & nicotine before shoveling. Caffeine and nicotine act as stimulants by increasing the heart rate and constricting blood vessels which put more strain on the heart.
- Set a time limit. Shoveling snow is hard work. With a long sidewalk, you could be shoveling for up to an hour or more. When feasible, come inside after 20-30 minutes and start again.
- Most importantly, listen to your body. Stop if you feel pain.