



The Scoop on Snow Shoveling

Be heart-healthy and back-friendly while shoveling snow with these tips.

Talk With a Doctor Before Starting

Those that are inactive and have a history of heart trouble should talk to a doctor before taking on the task of shoveling snow.

Pick the Correct Shovel

- ❖ An ergonomic snow shovel can help take some of the efforts out of snow removal chores. A shovel with a curved handle or an adjustable handle length will minimize painful bending, requiring bending the knees only slightly and arching the back very slightly while keeping the shovel blade on the ground.
- ❖ Consider using two shovels to clear snow. One should be a lightweight pusher/scrapper to move the snow off to the sides, and the other, a lightweight plastic or aluminum snow shovel to lift the snow.
- ❖ Get shovels that are an appropriate size. Scrapers range from 18 inches up to 36 inches, so don't get a scraper that is too big to comfortably handle.



Before Starting

- ❖ Avoid caffeine or nicotine before beginning. These are stimulants, which may increase your heart rate and cause your blood vessels to constrict. This places extra stress on the heart.
- ❖ Drink plenty of water. Dehydration is just as big an issue in cold winter months as it is in the summer.
- ❖ Dress in several layers so layers can be removed as needed. Synthetic fibers help wick away perspiration better than natural fibers.
- ❖ Warm muscles before shoveling by walking for a few minutes or marching in place. Stretch muscles in the arms and legs because warm muscles will work more efficiently and be less likely to be injured.



Use Proper lifting Techniques

- ❖ Begin shoveling slowly to avoid placing a sudden demand on the heart. Pace yourself and take breaks as needed.
- ❖ Whenever possible, push the snow to one side rather than lifting it
- ❖ Protect the back from injury by lifting correctly. Stand with feet about hip width for balance and keep the shovel close to the body. Always face towards the object being lifted (have shoulders and hips both squarely facing it).
- ❖ Bend at the hips, not the low back, and push the chest out, pointing forward. Then, bend the knees and lift with leg muscles, keeping the back straight.
- ❖ Tighten stomach muscles as the snow is lifted.
- ❖ Keep the loads light and do not lift an object that is too heavy. If needed, grip the shovel with one hand as close to the blade as comfortably possible and the other hand on the handle (handle and arm length will vary the technique).
- ❖ Avoid twisting the back to move the object to its new location – always pivot the whole body to face the new direction.
- ❖ Keep the heaviest part of the object close to the body at the center of gravity - do not extend your arms to throw the snow.
- ❖ Walk to the new location to deposit the item rather than reaching for or tossing it.
- ❖ Most importantly, listen to the body and stop if there is ever pain.

Be Wise

Shoveling a small amount of snow early in the snowfall and then going back out again may translate into more time spent shoveling, but it's also a lot less likely to overtax the heart and back.



Winter, is not a season...It is an Adventure!