

Shoveling Snow

In addition to other safety considerations in the winter months, shoveling snow poses risks to people. Injuries from slips, sun exposure, working around moving vehicles, or muscle strains, frostbite, and heart attacks are all possible. Whether on the job or at home, if you live in a climate where you may have to clear snow off driveways or sidewalks, the following safe tips may prevent injuries.



- **Know Your Limitations** – Consider alternatives to shoveling like a snow blower, or service that does this activity for you.
- **Drink Water** – Typically, people shovel snow in the morning when they're dehydrated. Dehydration is also a stress to the heart. Drink a couple of glasses of water about thirty minutes before you start snow removal activities. Stay hydrated throughout all work periods.
- **Stretch Your Muscles** – Snow shoveling is the same as vigorously exercising. Stretch the muscles in your back, legs, shoulders and arms prior to starting activities to prevent muscle injury.
- **Dress in Layers** - Putting on a heavy coat is common prior to starting these tasks. This is potentially dangerous because you may quickly overheat within a few minutes. This also puts greater strain on your heart. Try wearing a shirt under a sweater under a light jacket, and strip off layers as you warm up.
- **Cover your face and hands in extreme cold** – Frostbite is common in subzero temperatures, particularly to the extremities. Ensure your fingertips are fully covered with gloves, you are wearing layered socks under your boots, and your nose and ears are covered when the air or wind chill temperatures are below zero conditions. Use sunscreen if the sun is out due to increased reflective exposure from the snow.
- **Handle only what you can lift** – Snow can be heavy! Know your lifting capabilities. Only handle an amount of snow within your capabilities and use your leg muscles when lifting.
- **Take Frequent Breaks** - Take a break every 5 or 10 minutes while you're working. Never let your heart rate exceed 85 percent of its maximum. Monitor your heart rate and pace yourself. An estimate for finding your maximum heart rate is to subtract your age from 220.
- **Don't Ignore Chest Pain or Tightness** -- If this kind of ache strikes, assume the worst and call 911.