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NANCY RICHMOND / Herald

Tips for Avoiding Injury when Shoveling Snow

Winter is here and since we live in New England we must expect and be prepared for the flakes to fall! Unfortunately we are all at risk of injury when we venture outside to shovel snow. The most common

part of the body to injury is the low back – sprains, strains and disc herniations are all common due to the combination of bending, twisting and lifting involved with shoveling snow.

To minimize your risks follow these guidelines;

- ⇒ Warm up before you start with a small walk and gentle stretches.
- ⇒ Allow plenty of time and take frequent breaks – for example, shovel for 15 minutes, then rest for 10mins, then continue.
- ⇒ When lifting snow use your legs, by bending at your knees.
- ⇒ Shovel small loads of snow.
- ⇒ If you can, shovel snow as soon as it falls as it is lighter, rather than waiting until it begins to melt when it is much heavier.
- ⇒ Hold stomach muscles in when bending, twisting, shoveling and lifting. This will help to stabilize and protect your low back.
- ⇒ Avoid bending, lifting and twisting at the same time.
- ⇒ Wear appropriate footwear to avoid slipping and falling when shoveling.
- ⇒ Purchase a good quality snow shovel – it really makes a difference!
- ⇒ Once complete, enjoy a cup of hot chocolate – you deserve it!



Your ability to shovel snow will be determined by your level of fitness. If you are not physically fit or have a history of low back pain than it is a wise choice to avoid shoveling snow – get a snow blower, or ask for help. In addition if you have a history of falling or have problems with balance shoveling snow is not for you. If you do have the level of fitness required to shovel snow don't be surprised if you experience normal post-exercise muscle soreness after shoveling. This can last up to 2 days after shoveling. If the pain persists contact your physician or physical therapist.

The information on this page is provided to you from Performance Physical Therapy. It is not intended to replace any information/treatment provided to you by your health care provider. If you experience any pain while participating in this exercise, please contact your health care provider. Please feel free to check with your Physical Therapist if you have any questions about the information provided on this page.

We are here to help you reach your Peak Performance!

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