

Stay Safe While Clearing Snow

- **Check with your doctor.** Because this activity places high stress on the heart, speak with your physician first. If you have a medical condition or do not exercise regularly, consider hiring someone to remove the snow.
- **Dress appropriately.** Light, layered, water-repellent clothing provides both ventilation and insulation. It is also important to wear the appropriate head coverings, as well as mittens or gloves and thick, warm socks. Take a break if you feel yourself getting too hot or too cold.
- **See what you are shoveling/snow blowing.** Make sure that your hat or scarf does not block your vision. Watch for ice patches and uneven surfaces. Avoid falls by wearing shoes or boots that have slip-resistant soles.
- **Clear snow early and often.** Begin when a light covering of snow is on the ground to avoid trying to clear packed, heavy snow.

When shoveling:

- **Warm up your muscles.** Shoveling can be a vigorous activity. Before you begin, warm up your muscles for 10 minutes with light exercise.
- **Pace yourself.** Take frequent breaks and replenish fluids to prevent dehydration. If you experience chest pain, shortness of breath or other signs of a heart attack, seek emergency care.
- **Use a shovel that is comfortable for your height and strength.** Do not use a shovel that is too heavy or too long for you. Consider buying a shovel that is specially designed to prevent too much stooping. Space your hands on the tool grip to increase your leverage.
- **When possible, push the snow instead of lifting it.** If you must lift, take small amounts of snow, and lift it with your legs: Squat with your legs apart, knees bent and back straight. Lift by straightening your legs, without bending at the waist. Then walk to where you want to dump the snow; holding a shovelful of snow with your arms outstretched puts too much weight on your spine.
- **Do not throw the snow over your shoulder or to the side.** This requires a twisting motion that stresses your back.

When snowblowing:

- **Never stick your hands or feet in the snow blower.** If snow becomes too impacted, stop the engine and wait at least five seconds. Use a solid object to clear wet snow or debris from the chute. Beware of the recoil of the motor and blades after the machine has been turned off.
- **Do not leave the snow blower unattended when it is running.** Shut off the engine if you must walk away from the machine.
- **Watch the snow blower cord.** If you are operating an electric snow blower, be aware of where the power cord is at all times, so you do not trip and fall.
- **Add fuel before starting the snow blower.** Never add fuel when the engine is running or hot. Do not operate the machine in an enclosed area.
- **Read the instruction manual.** Prior to using a snow blower, read the instruction manual for specific safety hazards, unfamiliar features, and whenever attempting to repair or maintain the snow blower

Visit <http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=A00060> for more tips on snow shoveling safety.

Source: American Academy of Orthopaedic, <http://www.orthoinfo.org/>