

Helpful Hints for Snow Shoveling

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Winter is fast approaching and so is the dreaded task of snow shoveling those driveways, straining your back, and freezing your toes, which doesn't seem like fun.

Here are a few pointers that will help you view shoveling as exercise rather than torment:

- If you have a heart problem or other medical condition, consult with your physician before you perform strenuous activity.
- Dress for the weather. Layers are best and wear a hat since you lose most of your body heat through your head. Take extra precautions for keeping extremities warm.
- Warm up your muscles by doing a few stretches before shoveling as described below:

Hamstring Stretch:

Place foot on a stool or step with leg straight, slowly lean forward keeping back straight and reach down leg until a stretch is felt in back of thigh and hold for 5 seconds. Repeat 3-5 times.

Pretzel Stretch (shoulder):

With your arms straight clasp your palms behind your back. Then gently lift your arms away from your back. Repeat 3-5 times with a 5 second hold.

Back Stretching (standing):

Place hands on back of hips and lean backwards while lifting chest, until a stretch is felt and hold for 5 seconds. Repeat 3-5 times.

- Push snow out of the way when possible. This will place less strain on your back with pushing instead of throwing.
- Don't over reach. Move your feet with your body to avoid excessive bending at the waist or leaning over too far.
- Move your feet as you turn to throw the snow to decrease tension on your back, which can pinch spinal nerves.
- Bend at the knees as you are scooping the snow up and lift with your legs not your back.
- Limit your shoveling to 20-30 minutes. Take breaks, stand up straight or do a few backbends to help ease back muscles.
- Drink plenty of fluids, but avoid shoveling after eating.