

# 5 Strategies to Prevent Injury During Snow Removal

## A Cold Start

Winter is upon us! We have had many days of frigid temperatures and a fair amount of snow fall. While it's fun to sled, build snowmen, and launch snowballs at one another, there are many risks the snow and ice pose to our health. Slick conditions, freezing sidewalks, and snow cleanup can all create challenges to consider.

Most of us are aware of the risk of slipping and falling during icy conditions. Often, we don't think about the most common injuries that occur during snow removal including: back injuries, shoulder impingement, and heart attacks. It is essential to be proactive to protect your body.

## 5 Strategies for Injury Prevention

### 1) Warm Up Inside

Take 5 to 10 minutes to stretch, practice squatting properly, and get your heart rate up before going outside. Be sure to visualize and practice bending from your knees and hips, while avoiding rotating and twisting the spine.

### 2) Hydrate

Sweating under multiple layers of clothing, heavy breathing during exertion, and a decreased thirst sensation in cold weather all create a dangerous risk for dehydration while shoveling. Drink plenty of water before, during, and after snow removal.

### 3) Choose the Right Tools

Ergonomic shovels with curved handles are available at all hardware stores and create an improved mechanical advantage for your body. While you might be able to get away with poor form while removing an inch or two of snow, the deeper the snow, the heavier the load. An ergonomic shape to a shovel allows for less stress at the spine and arms and lets the larger muscles of the lower body do their job.

### 4) Work in Shifts

Depending on your fitness level and history of injury, work in 10 to 15 minute shifts outside, while staying active inside before beginning again. Remember to hydrate during these breaks.

### 5) Know Your Limits

If you are out of shape or not accustomed to physical activity, spending 2 hours shoveling 6 inches of snow is simply not a good idea. Exercise is medicine; a medicine which increases the longevity of your brain and body. Why wait to start a fitness program? Prepare your body for much more than shoveling – health and wellness!