

Prevent an Injury While Shoveling the Snow

We are all experiencing with the cold weather these last couple of weeks. Depending on where you live, you may be experiencing icy conditions and snow accumulations that needs to be removed from our driveways walkways and cars.

TIP OF THE WEEK



With New Jersey's first substantial snow accumulations of the season on the way, a winter storm warning is in effect from late Friday night through late Saturday night from Ocean County south to Northern Jersey. Many people will be shoveling snow and some may end at the hospital do to related injuries. If you don't want to be one of them it is important to be smart and know your body before venturing out in the snow to shovel. Here are 8 tips for you to think about this winter before shoveling your snow.

1. Be Proactive: Consider salting your driveway and walkway before it starts snowing. This will not only make it easier to shovel, but may also prevent unnecessary slips and falls.

2. Do the Proper Warm Up: Treat shoveling snow just like a sport (even though it is not as much fun). You should warm up your muscles with a 5 min brisk walk around your house, then stretch (hamstrings, quads, calves, arms and shoulders), perform 1–2 sets of planks to activate your core muscles. This will help prepare your muscles for the rigorous activity ahead.

3. Start Early and Perform in intervals: It is easier to shovel fresh-fallen snow than snow that has been sitting overnight. To make it easier for yourself, clear a few inches of snow throughout the day instead of waiting until the snowfall has stopped.

4. Choose an Ergonomic Shovel: Ergonomically correct shovels are typically made of plastic type material making them much lighter

than regular shovels and they have contoured handles to reduce bending and decrease lifting.

5. Use Proper Body Mechanics: It is very important to bend from your hips and knees instead of your back when bending over to shovel the snow. Think about the perfect squat (feet width apart, bending at your knees, core engaged), and then try to emulate that position. Your quads should become sore from shoveling, not your back. In addition, try to push the snow with the shovel instead of picking it up keeping your arms as close to your body as possible. Find where you want the snow to go and push it with the shovel in a straight line. Do not pick up the snow and rotate your back to throw it. This is the most common way to “throw out your back”.

6. Activate your core: The entire time you are shoveling, you should be “bracing” your back. This can be done by engaging your abdominal muscles by pulling your belly button in towards your spine as if you were “walking into a really cold pool of water”. By activating your core

muscles, you will be creating a natural back brace while shoveling which in turn will help protect your back.

7. Know your Limits: You may not be as young and strong as you once were, so please know your limits. Shovel small amounts of snow at a time, take frequent rest breaks, and ask for help when needed. If you start experiencing chest discomfort, shortness of breath or left sided arm pain stop immediately and seek medical attention, as those are signs of a heart attack.

8. Be smart and seek a Physical Therapist: If you have a history of back pain, elbow pain, neck pain, shoulder pain or knee pain—come and visit us and learn about how physical therapist could teach you the correct exercises to perform before you start shoveling snow. The biggest predictor of future injury is a past history of injury. You can receive physical therapy now without an doctor's prescription and start right away. Use **betterPT** app to search and find us or visit our website [scerbopt](#) to book an appointment.