



SNOW SHOVELING SAFELY

Each year, despite multiple warnings, many area residents will injure themselves shoveling or using the snow blower. These injuries include ligament or muscle strains, lower back strains, loss of fingers, and heart attacks. The good news is that using a little common sense and following several snow removal tips can prevent most of the injuries.

- Keep the lower back straight. Bend the knees while lifting or pushing with the legs, which are more powerful.
- Lift smaller loads instead of trying to extend your limits.
- Shovel the snow forward instead of throwing it to the side. Twisting dramatically increases pressure on the spine. Use a step to create momentum if throwing or lifting snow in order to reduce the strain.
- Take frequent breaks while shoveling or using the snow blower. Straighten up and walk around to loosen up and extend the lower back. Bending backward with hands on the hips is also helpful. Try to take a break *before* pain or stiffness appears.
- Take a few minutes to stretch before and after shoveling or snow blowing. Muscles that are cold and tight are much more susceptible to an injury.
- Back or shoulder problems may be caused by pulling on the starting line of the snow blower. Keep the machine properly maintained for the ease of starting. If it is still a strain, consider a model with an electric start.
- Before snow blowing an area remove sleds, door mats, stones, pieces of wood, etc., which may get stuck in the machine. Smaller objects might be thrown at a high speed from the machine causing harm or damage if it hits someone or something.
- Avoid hanging scarves as they can easily be caught in the propeller of the machine.
- Let the snow blower do the work; do not force it with excessive pushing. Take a smaller cut in the path or chop up solidly packed snow with a shovel first. If it is consistently difficult the blower may be underpowered for your needs.



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