



# Shoveling Snow

## SafeTips from the Naval Safety Center

Quick and easy summaries to find out about something new you're doing or as a refresher for something you haven't done in a while. They're a great training tool to pass around at meetings, through e-mail, or post on bulletin boards.

While shoveling snow can be good exercise, it can also be dangerous for optimistic shovelers who take on more than they can handle. Individuals over the age of 40, or those who are relatively inactive, should be especially careful. If you have a history of heart trouble, do not shovel without a doctor's permission. The National Safety Council offers the following tips to help you get a handle on safe shoveling:

- ⇒ **Dress in layers, but dress warmly.** Most people throw on a heavy coat, then quickly overheat once they've been at it a few minutes. This puts your heart under greater strain. Try wearing a shirt under a sweater under a light jacket, and strip off layers as you warm up. Remember that extremities, such as the nose, ears, hands and feet, need extra attention during winter's cold. If the temperature is too cold, wear a turtleneck, cap, scarf, face protection, mittens, wool socks and waterproof boots.
- ⇒ **Do it right.** Shovel only fresh snow. Freshly fallen, powdery snow is easier to shovel than the wet, packed-down variety. Push the snow as you shovel. It's easier on your back than lifting the snow out of the way. Don't pick up too much at once. Use a small shovel, or fill only one-fourth or one-half of a large one. Lift with your legs bent, not your back. Keep your back straight. By bending and "sitting" into the movement, you'll keep your spine upright and less stressed. Your shoulders, torso and thighs can do the work for you.
- ⇒ **Drink water .** Most people shovel snow in the morning when they're dehydrated. Dehydration also stresses the heart, so drink a couple of glasses of water about thirty minutes before you start tossing snow.
- ⇒ **Take it slow.** Do not work to the point of exhaustion. If you run out of breath, take a break. If you feel tightness in your chest, stop immediately. Take a break every 5 or 10 minutes while you're working. And never let your heart rate exceed 85 percent of its maximum. To find out your maximum heart rate subtract your age from 220.

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