

Shoveling Snow the Proper way

By Joseph Parish



Here we are already with number three of our “Winter Awareness Month” articles. One of the realities of approaching winter time weather is the accumulation of snow. Every season after a snow downfall occurs, we see people out shoveling snow and breaking up ice accumulations from their sidewalks and driveways. Let’s get real here, this kind of activity is hard work and not everyone is likely to be in shape to do these actions.

In order to prevent serious injuries when shoveling snow, the National Safety Council in conjunction with the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons have provided guidelines. By following these simple tips it is hoped that serious injuries can be prevented during this winter season.

Preparations are important when you get ready to exit the comfort of your home and enter the cold outside to shovel snow. Always dress warmly and make sure to pay special attention to your extremities. Keep your ears, feet, hands and your nose warm and you will feel comfortable on the rest of your body.

Every year you hear how someone died in your town because of shoveling snow outside his home. It cannot be stressed enough that one should never attempt to shovel if they are out of shape. The task is difficult enough for someone who takes care of their health and body but becomes down right disastrous for those who are drastically out of shape. Avoid the task if you have a history of any sort of heart trouble or difficulties breathing. Those with COPD and other respiratory diseases should consult with your doctor first.

Before you begin your task of shoveling snow it is beneficial to do a few light warm-up exercises to get you broken in. Schedule frequent breaks throughout the work process and never drink alcohol before or while shoveling the snow. Likewise avoid smoking while you are shoveling outdoors.

When you are shoveling always try to push the snow towards the front of you. If it absolutely becomes necessary to lift the shovel to remove snow then pick it up in small amounts while lifting with your legs and never your back. Don’t toss the snow over your

shoulders or attempt to throw it to your side. More people knock their backs out by this maneuver than by any other means.

Make use of salt or some sort of de-icing compound in order to remove the ice from on your steps, the walkway and from the sidewalks. It never hurts to drop a bit of sand on walkways to prevent slipping. If you are lucky enough to have a snow blower follow the manufacturer's guidelines for proper use. Always read the manual that came with the machine before you even start it up. Think safety for every step of operation when using it. Above all ensure all pets and people are out of the way and never place your hand near the blower's blades to remove debris or snow. To remove any sort of build up near the blades first turn off the machine and then use a broomstick to poke and remove – not your hands. Lastly never leave it unattended.

Now we come to the end of this session and if you heed these tips, I am certain I will find you reading the next articles. In the meantime, please stay safe.