



# Shoveling Snow

Winter weather brings many hazards for individuals who have to experience it where they live and work. Whether it is driving in poor conditions or having to clear snow, any task done in winter weather conditions often results in a higher chance of injury. One winter weather work task that can easily result in injury is shoveling snow.

## SNOW SHOVELING INJURIES

Shoveling snow is a straightforward process, but it is a work task that often ends in injury both on the job and at home. The American Journal of Emergency Medicine conducted a study that looked at the most common health hazards when shoveling snow. They looked at 195,000 injuries treated at hospitals that resulted from shoveling snow over a 17-year period (1990-2006).

### Among the study findings:

- Most common injuries: Overworking your muscles, falling, and being hit with the shovel.
- Other common injuries included lower back, cuts, and broken bones.
- The arms and hands were the most likely body regions to sustain a bone fracture.
- Muscle, ligament, tendon, and other soft tissue injuries topped the list of snow shoveling mishaps.
- Heart-related problems made up only 7% of snow shoveling injuries. However, all deaths due to snow shoveling were caused by heart problems.
- Adults over 55 were over four times more likely than younger people to have heart-related symptoms while shoveling.

## BEST PRACTICES TO AVOID INJURY WHILE SHOVELING SNOW

- Prior to considering shoveling as your only option, consider mechanical methods to clear snow, such as a vehicle with a plow or snowblower.
- If you do have to shovel, take time to warm up or properly stretch prior to starting.
- Do not overexert yourself. If you are not used to a heavy physical workload or have health issues, take your time while shoveling snow. Depending on the severity of any health issues, consider eliminating shoveling altogether by having someone else complete the task.
- Use proper work posture when shoveling. Avoid actions, such as rounding your back or twisting when lifting.
- Always lift with your legs and not with your back.
- When possible, push the snow out of the way to limit lifting and throwing the snow. Pushing the snow is less hazardous than lifting and throwing snow.
- Use an ergonomically friendly snow shovel. While the overall design of snow shovels is basically the same, there are many that have been designed with the human body in mind.
- Watch your step and wear proper footwear for the task. Preventing slips, trips, and falls in winter weather conditions can be extremely difficult to do. Having the proper footwear and taking your time while walking can reduce the chance of these incidents occurring.

Dsssocial. "Shovelling Snow Safety Talk: Diversified Staffing Services." Diversified Staffing, 5 Nov. 2019, <https://www.diversifiedstaffing.com/dss-blog/shovelling-snow-safety-talk-2/>.

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