



Snow Shoveling Safety



Snow shoveling is something we have all come to live with in Wisconsin. But while there is work to be done it is also important to be aware of how to shovel safely to prevent muscle injury and prevent the risk of heart attack.

Studies have shown that two minutes after shoveling a sedentary person's heart rate can rise to levels higher than what is recommended during aerobic activity. This puts excess stress on the heart and can also raise blood pressure to an unsafe level. There has been an increased number of fatal heart attacks following heavy snowfalls because of strenuous shoveling.

So what can be done? These are some tips with ensuring a clean driveway while also doing what is best for your body.

- * Avoid caffeine and nicotine before shoveling. These will also increase your heart rate and blood pressure putting you more at risk for a heart attack.
- * Stretch for 5-10 minutes before going out to shovel. Stretch back, neck, arm, stomach and leg muscles.
- * Use a shovel with a long handle to avoid unnecessary bending. Make sure the shovel has a moderate size blade to avoid over lifting. Take ½ scoops to avoid muscle strain.
- * Keep your body square to the shovel with feet and back facing the shovel. Keep legs slightly bent and keep back relatively straight. Use legs to push shovel into the snow. Do not twist the shovel to prevent back strain and injury.
- * Every 5-10 minutes (or sooner if needed) stop shoveling and stretch. Catch your breath, as breathing can be harder too with the cold weather and strenuous activity.
- * Do not shovel if you have a history of angina. Check with your doctor if you have any cardiac issues, hypertension, back or neck pain, or if you are out of shape to see if shoveling is recommended.

If you have difficulty with shoveling, check with family, friends or neighbors to see if assistance can be given. Senior citizens can call the Waukesha County Department of Senior Services at (262) 548-7828 to see what services are available to assist with snow removal.

May you all have a safe, healthy and warm winter. Continue to pray for God's blessings of health, happiness and safety into the coming new year!

References: "The Scoop on Snow Shoveling Safety", North Dakota State University, November 1999, Jocey Mathern and Julie Garden-Robinson. "Rhode Island Athletic Trainers Association" "Snow Shoveling Safety", NBC Weather Plus, 2/12/07.

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**Blood Pressure
Screening:**
Sun., January 20
9:00 AM

Office Hours
Tuesday 1-3 p.m.