Snow Shoveling Safety

Safe snow shoveling requires proper preparation, good technique and knowledge.

Preparation

↩ Talk to your doctor about this activity and your health status before winter season arrives.

↩ Think twice if you:

☞ Have had a heart attack or have other forms of heart disease
☞ Have high blood pressure or high cholesterol levels
☞ Are a smoker
☞ Lead a sedentary lifestyle.

↩ Consider hiring a student or using a volunteer service if you are a senior.

↩ Shovel at least 1-2 hours after eating and avoid caffeine and nicotine.

↩ Warm up first (walk or march in place for several minutes before beginning).

↩ Start slow and continue at a slow pace (Suggestion: shovel for 5-7 minutes and rest 2-3 minutes).

↩ Drink lots of water to prevent dehydration.

↩ Shovel early and often:

☞ New snow is lighter than heavily packed/partially melted snow
☞ Take frequent breaks.

Technique

↩ Always try to push snow rather than lifting it.

↩ Protect your back by lifting properly and safely:

☞ Stand with feet at hip width for balance
☞ Hold the shovel close to your body
Space hands apart to increase leverage
Bend from your knees not your back
Tighten your stomach muscles while lifting
Avoid twisting while lifting
Walk to dump snow rather than throwing it

When snow is deep, shovel small amounts (1-2 inches at a time) at a time.

If the ground is icy or slippery, spread salt, sand or kitty litter to create better foot traction.

Knowledge
Shoveling snow is strenuous activity that is very stressful on the heart.

Exhaustion makes you more susceptible to frostbite, injury and hypothermia.

Stop shoveling and call 911 if you have:
- Discomfort or heaviness in the chest, arms or neck
- Unusual or prolonged shortness of breath
- A dizzy or faint feeling
- Excessive sweating or nausea and vomiting.

http://www.toronto.ca/ems/safety_tips/shovelling.htm