



# SNOW SHOVELING 101

Winter is here, and freezing temperatures, sleet and snow can cause havoc and injuries. Before you begin to clear snow from your driveway or walkway, remember that snow shoveling is a cardiovascular and weight-lifting exercise. It should be treated like a day in the gym - stretch before exercising and take it slow if you're not in shape. Using good body mechanics will decrease the stress to your spine and decrease your risk of injury and falls. Here are some tips to keep good body mechanics and avoid overexertion when snow shoveling:

- **STAY STRAIGHT:** Keep your back straight (or a slight inward curve); it will decrease the pressure on your low back when lifting.
- **FACE THE SNOW:** Be sure to face the snow you plan to shovel and lift.
- **USE YOUR BODY:** Bend your knees, tighten your stomach and use your leg muscles when lifting snow. This will help divide the weight of the snow more evenly and help protect your back.
- **KEEP IT CLOSE:** Keep the shovel as close to your body as possible when lifting and moving snow.
- **DON'T TWIST:** When moving snow, avoid twisting your back by turning your whole body and pivoting with your legs to face the new direction. Avoid "tossing it" to the new location.
- **USE THE RIGHT SHOVEL:** Use an ergonomically correct shovel (the rod of the shovel will bend in an elbow shape)/ Adjustable handle lengths help to prevent excessive bending, and a lightweight blade helps reduce the amount of weight you are lifting.
- **GRIP THE SHOVEL:** Grip the shovel with one hand as close to the blade as comfortably possible and the other hand on the handle.
- **TAKE YOUR TIME:** Move smaller amounts of snow and tackle your snow-shoveling project by dividing the job into thirds, with one-hour rest breaks.
- **AVOID FALLS:** Wear shoes or boots with good treads. Spreading sand, salt, or kitty litter on your walkways will reduce the likelihood of slipping on the ice.

