



The Sport of Shoveling :

How to Get the Driveway Clean this Winter without an Aching Back

As we head in to the winter months, I know it will become tougher to get in touch with my friends and colleagues who are chiropractors, orthopedic physicians and physical therapists, as their office will soon be filled with patients hunched over in pain after shoveling snow.

Statistics show that over 85% of all adults will suffer some form of back pain in their lives, with many of them suffering from repeat bouts. Pharmacies are continually expanding their sections dedicated to muscle and joint pain relief. So is it any wonder that our population can be put at great risk when put against the rigors of shoveling after a heavy snow storm? Here are some tips to help keep you healthy and safe this winter:

-Keep it Close - By keeping your shovel close to your body, you gain much better leverage over the load you are lifting. Be sure to bend at the knees and hips and try to remind yourself to keep your spine long and chest out. This will avoid putting your spine in the very vulnerable forward flexed position under load. Also try to avoid having to move to snow on to a high pile or elevation, which will cause you to over-extend your spine.



-Switch it Up – Be sure to alternate your grip on the shovel as well as switch which side of your body you throw the snow off to. Continually moving the snow to one side may cause an over load to the musculature of one side of your body, leading to imbalance and/or breakdown. Also be sure to rotate from your hip and swivel your feet, and not rotate purely from the torso.



-Break it into Sets – Especially for someone who is less active, it is critical that you take breaks often when shoveling. Lifting and moving snow can be much more vigorous than your average gym routine, but most people wouldn't go into their fitness center and do continuous sets of the same bending and twisting exercise for hours without rest like they do with shoveling.

-Stay Hydrated – It is very deceiving because of the temperature outside, but it is very easy to become dehydrated when shoveling. Most often you are wearing heavy clothing and will begin to sweat from the combination of effort and heat. Be sure to drink plenty of fluids prior to, during and after shoveling.



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