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HOW TO PREVENT LOW BACK INJURIES WHILE SHOVELING SNOW

Preparation

- Choose a shovel that has a curved handle or a shovel that has an adjustable handle. This will reduce the amount of bending when you put the shovel blade on the ground.
- Choose a shovel that is lightweight (plastic), this will reduce the overall amount of weight. Let's face it, the snow is heavy enough.
- Warm up! You may not think shoveling is exercise, but you will be working hard to get the sidewalk and driveway cleaned up. Just like exercise, we need to warm up our muscles before doing physical work to prevent injuries. Complete a 10-15 minute warm up before shoveling. A warm up can include marching in place, walking, or going on the stationary bike. Once that is completed, then do stretches for your legs and arms.
- Wear shoes/boots that have good treads to minimize slipping. Spread salt, sand, or cat litter on icy parts of your driveway/sidewalk to prevent slipping and injuries.

Now you are ready to start shoveling, but what is the best technique?

Ergonomic technique

- Keep your hands about 12 inches apart to create more stability.
- Face the snow that you would like to clear, be sure that your hips and shoulders are squared off.
- Bend your knees, not your back, and lift using your leg muscles, keeping the low back straight.
- When moving the snow, avoid twisting your back. Instead, pivot your whole body to where you would like the snow to go and bend at the hips and knees to put the snow down.
- Do not extend your arms to throw the snow.

Pacing

- We want to get shoveling done as soon as possible and get back into the warm house, but take your time and keep each shovel light and take your time.
- For deep snow, shovel layers instead of trying to remove the full depth at once.
- Take breaks after 10-15 minutes of shoveling, stretch your arms and legs to stay warm and flexible.



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