

# Snow Removal Safety

Keeping the pain at bay when shoveling is important.

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When the snow hits, there will be a mad rush to clear it from driveways and sidewalks. But how you get rid of it, could take a toll on your health if you're not careful. If you're shoveling, twisting, reaching, bending and lifting can cause a new or recurring injury to a person's joints.

Most injuries are caused by the over-extension of muscles and poor body mechanics. Common injuries include a back or wrist strain, a pulled muscle, stress fracture or even a rotator cuff tear from a fall on the ice.

If a snow-blower is more your style, you still need to be careful. Every year, people in this area get seriously hurt by reaching into the machines while they're still running.

Dr. Blake Curd is at the Orthopedic Institute. He says, "There is a tendency to reach inside and try to unclog it with your hand and usually your glove sticks out further than your finger, if you're wearing gloves, hopefully you are. And that can get caught on the sharp metal edge and pull your hand right down into the discharge chute. As soon as it has a hold of your hand, it's over, the machine will injure you severely. A good rule of thumb I think people should remember, is once you turn the machine off, it's good to make one complete revolution around, walk all the way around the machine and survey it before you go sticking your hands in".

Dr. Curd says, one winter, he operated on nine people in one day for snow-blower injuries. Those split-second decisions to reach into the machines can have ramifications that last a lifetime.

To help avoid injury this winter, warm up your muscles for 10 minutes with stretching and light exercise. While shoveling, take plenty of breaks and stretch your back by leaning backward. Snow shoveling is an aerobic activity. Take breaks and replenish fluids to prevent dehydration. If you experience chest pain, shortness of breath or have any pain, stop right away and call your doctor.