

For Immediate Release

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Carleton Place & District Memorial Hospital Foundation
Carleton Place, ON

Physiotherapists with Carleton Place Hospital offer advice for safe snow shovelling

With the arrival of winter comes the dreaded task of snow shovelling. While many homeowners quickly become annoyed with the task, some will also experience pain and discomfort from shovelling snow. To help reduce the number of injuries, the Physiotherapy Department of the Carleton Place & District Memorial Hospital (CPDMH) have provided the following tips for safer snow shovelling.



Choose a shovel that's right for you:

- Use a shovel that feels comfortable for your height and strength. Avoid a shovel that is too heavy or too long.
- A shovel blade that is made of plastic will be lighter than a metal one, putting less strain on your spine. In addition a smaller blade allows you to avoid the temptation to pick up snow that is too heavy for you to carry.

Use proper techniques:

- To save your back, push the snow instead of lifting it. If you have to lift the snow, bend your knees and lift with your legs, **not** with your back. Avoid excessive twisting, bending or throwing snow over the shoulder because your spine could be injured.
- Clear heavy snow in two stages – by skimming snow from the top, then removing the bottom layer. In addition separate the job into smaller stages to prevent overexertion

Take care of your body:

- Take time to stretch and prepare your body for activity with a simple warm-up before shovelling, and wear warm clothing.
- Take a five-minute break for every 15 minutes of shovelling – stand up straight and walk around periodically to bring your spine back to a neutral position. You can also do standing extension exercises by placing your hands in the small of your back, bending slightly backwards, holding the position for several seconds, and repeating this movement 5 to 10 times.

“The most important thing to remember when shovelling snow is to listen to your body and heed signals of injury, such as shortness of breath, chest discomfort or any symptoms of back pain or repetitive strain”, stated Nadine O’Sullivan, CPDMH Physiotherapist. “As well, try not to overexert yourself and take your time while shoveling - the snow isn’t going anywhere until spring!”

For more information on safe snow shovelling please visit the website of the Canadian Physiotherapy Association at www.physiotherapy.ca.

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