



Shoveling Without Back Pain

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Tis the season... for shoveling snow that is. Children rejoice as snow leads to sledding and school closings. For everyone else snow means shoveling, and shoveling brings back pain. Well, its time to do battle against the snow. Here's what you are going to need: 1. Warm clothes. 2. Shovel. 3. Motivation. (I think it's the closet next to the gloves).

Here are a few things to keep in mind while shoveling.

- I. Before any sort of physical activity a warm-up is extremely important- especially in a cold environment. Here are a few ideas: Do a few shoulder rolls and shoulder circles, Toe touches, and some back bends.
- II. Choice of shovels is important, and bigger is not always better. Smaller plastic shovels are ideal since they are lighter and won't carry as much snow. This is important because it is better to keep each scoop smaller and perform more repetitions.
- III. Keep your back straight and don't hunch over. This is also easier to do if you have less snow on your shovel. It is also important to keep the load of snow close to your body.
- IV. Engage your core muscles when lifting and throwing. This is accomplished by contracting your stomach and back muscles. Keeping your core engaged will help to avoid back injuries.
- IV. Don't throw the snow too far, and don't twist your spine when throwing.
- VI. Switch arms/sides every few minutes when shoveling and take frequent breaks. This will help decrease strain in your muscles.

Following these few tips will help you to avoid most back pain from shoveling, but some soreness is inevitable. If you have back pain lasting more than a few days, consult your physician or physical therapist. They can give you more helpful tips on body mechanics and get you back in shape before the next snowfall.