



Snow Shoveling Safety

Snow shoveling, it would seem, is just another chore for most of Americans who live in regions hit by annual snow fall. As many as 100 people die each year from cardiac-related injuries associated with this task and more than 11,000 adults and children end up in the hospital every year.

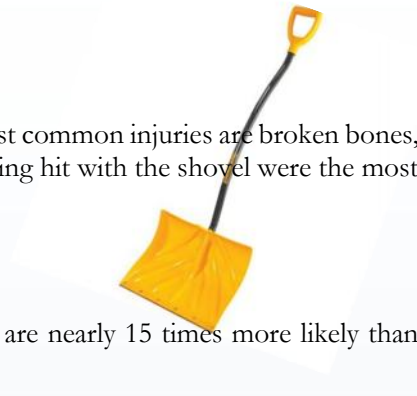
Injuries in Adults

A 17 year study published in the American Journal of Emergency Medicine reveals the most common injuries are broken bones, head and back injuries, and heart-related problems. Overworking muscles, falling and being hit with the shovel were the most common injuries.

Injuries in Children

Each year more than 700 snow shoveling injuries occur in children under 19. Children are nearly 15 times more likely than adults to be hurt because they were hit by a snow shovel, the majority were head injuries.

Safety Measures



Muscle Strain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To avoid muscle strain and stress, warm up muscles prior to shoveling. Try doing 10 minutes of stretching before going outside. Also, dressing appropriately in light layered clothing that wicks away moisture (nylon and polyester) will help protect muscles from the elements. - Using good form will also reduce the strain on the body. Space hands on the shovel approximately a foot apart and push the snow, rather than lift it. If the snow must be lifted, squat with legs apart, knees bent and back straight, then lift with the legs, and avoid bending at the waist. Scoop in small amounts, never throw snow over the shoulder or to the side as this requires twisting and may result in an injury. - Select a comfortable and appropriate show shovel. When shoveling wet snow, it's best to choose a shovel with a smaller blade and a curved handle; as shovel full of wet snow can weigh as much as 25 pounds.
Falling	Dress for the occasion. Wear shoes that will keep feet warm, dry and have non-slip soles. A pair of easy pull-on spikes for boots will improve traction and reduce slips and falls.
Head Injury	Using a plastic shovel is a better choice for light powdery snow and will likely result in a lesser impact injury. If a metal shovel is needed, to break up impacted snow, make sure there is no one standing within 10 feet of where snow is being shoveled.
Heart-Related Problems	Heart rate and blood pressure can increase more while shoveling than some other forms of exercise. Adding cold air, which cause the arteries to constrict and decrease blood supply, results in a higher chance of a heart attack. Persons that are inactive and have a history of heart trouble, should talk to a doctor before shoveling snow.

This fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice

For additional information on this topic please contact ACWA JPIA Risk Control Department, Terry Lofing, Administrative Assistant (tlofing@acwajpia.com) or 800-231-5742