



The Spinal Column

Snow Shoveling - Can You Dig It?

By Dr. Jonathan Eto, B.Sc., B.Ed., C.Ped., D.C.

Can You Dig It?

After a nice snowfall in December, we can expect to keep digging for a couple more months. But are you aware of the vigorous workout snow shoveling entails? Some literature concludes that shoveling snow requires as much energy as running 15 kilometres per hour! Such regular activity maintains or increases cardiovascular fitness, though most people don't understand that the initial attempt at shoveling, especially if the snow is wet, is like picking up heavy weights. Sometimes weighing as much as 25 pounds!

It's not surprising then, that many people suffer from muscle fatigue, lower back, shoulder pain, wrist pain, vertebral disc damage and even spinal fractures during the winter season.

How can I prevent these injuries?

WARM UP FOR THE COLD!

Warm-up your muscles for 10 minutes with light exercise and stretching, just as if you were about to begin your exercise program in the gym or play a sport! Remember: Cold and tight muscles are more likely to strain than warm and relaxed muscles.

Try some brisk movements like Jumping Jacks, then take time to prepare your body for activity with some simple stretches. Try some of the following, keeping in mind to hold each stretch for 10 - 15 seconds and repeat three times.

A) wrists/ankles - rotate them to the left and right ten times each.

B) neck - place your hand over your head, gently grasping your ear on the opposite side. Using only the weight of your shoulder, allow your neck to be pulled towards your shoulder.

C) gluteals & low back - lie on your back with knees bent. Bring one knee to your chest, then the other. You can also do both knees at the same time.

D) calves - with a straight leg, lean forward with the ball of one foot at the edge of a step. Then push your heel down. You can also push against a wall while keeping only one straight leg back with your heel flat on the floor.

E) hamstrings - on the ground with one leg forward, try to grasp your toes and gently pull your head to the same knee.

F) quadriceps - while standing, stabilize yourself against something (wall or handle), bend your knee and pull your ankle with a free hand to your gluteals.

G) shoulders - roll your shoulders forwards and back. Try pulling one arm across your chest using the other arm, or push it back by leaning against a wall.

LIFTING SNOW IS LIKE LIFTING WEIGHTS

Try to minimize the loads by pushing the snow to the edge and then lifting. Face the snow you're about to shovel. Always keep your back straight and bend at the knees. If you must, walk to where you are dumping the snow rather than throwing it. Remember: to step into a forward direction and throw the snow ahead of you. Avoid twisting and throwing the snow over your shoulder. Overextension (by keeping your arms too straight) and overexertion of muscles, increases a person's susceptibility to musculoskeletal injuries. Therefore, lift smaller scoops!

PACE YOURSELF

Clear the snow early and often. Begin when a light covering of snow is on the ground to avoid shoveling packed, heavy snow. 15 minutes of snow shoveling counts as moderate physical activity, take frequent breaks if you get tired or work it in to your daily exercise routine!

USE PROPER EQUIPMENT AND CLOTHING

Use a shovel that is comfortable to your size and strength. Do not use a shovel that is too heavy or too long. Space your hands on the tool grip to increase your leverage. Ideally, wear light, layered, water-repellent clothing to provide both ventilation and insulation. It is also important to wear the appropriate head coverings (toque or scarf), as well as mittens or gloves and thick, warm socks. Needless to say, non-slip footwear is essential and make sure they're water-proof!

How can we help you at our Clinic?

We never like to see our friends get injured, but in the event that something should arise, our Chiropractors and Registered Massage Therapists can work together to assist you in restoring your mobility and enhancing your health.

We also have a variety of Modalities (Physio), X-ray Facility and a Naturopathic Doctor here at in GoodHands.

Enjoy the snow!

About the Author:



Dr. Eto graduated from York University with a degree in biology. He then completed teacher's college at Brock University before earning his Doctor of Chiropractic from the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College in 2000. To add a focus on Orthotic and foot care, he continued his education in 2007 to become a Pedorthist while studying with the Robert M. Palmer M.D. Institute of Biomechanics. He is also bilingual in English and French.

An active person in the community, Dr. Eto is the Official Team Chiropractor for the Brampton Battalion (OHL) and has worked for several years with women's amateur hockey (PWHL). He also holds a Black Belt in Judo, and has competed internationally while training with Kidokan Judo Club at the Brampton YMCA. His greatest achievement was to be ranked second in Canada.

Athletic injuries have been a focus of Dr. Eto's as he has worked with several athletes and sports teams from amateur to professional levels. Dr. Eto also enjoys supply teaching on his days off, keeping in touch with youth and volunteering his services with their extracurricular programs. Other special interests are in Photography, Music (former disc jockey), Swimming (retired lifeguard) and playing Hockey and Baseball.

Main and Franchise Clinics:



In GoodHands Rehabilitation & Wellness Centre

Bramalea City Centre – Inside GoodLife Fitness
Unit 50A - 25 Peel Centre Drive, Brampton, ON L6T 3R5
Phone: (905) 453-5858 **Fax:** (905) 453-8995
Email: info@ingoodhandswellness.com

Services:

- Acupuncture
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- Orthotics
- Physiotherapy

Products:

- Athletic Braces & Splints
- Compression Stockings
- Memory Foam Pillows
- Custom Made Orthotics
- Health Supplements

Clinic Hours:

Mon. and Wed.: 9:30 am - 8:30 pm
Tues. and Thurs.: 10:00 am - 9:00 pm
Fri.: 9:30 am - 7:00 pm
Sat.: 9:30 am - 2:30 pm
Sun.: Closed

In GreatHands Chiropractic & Wellness Centre

Inside Oshawa Centre Mall
C/O Goodlife, 419 King Street West, Oshawa, ON L1J 2K5
Phone: (905) 433-9520 **Fax:** (905) 433-8144
Email: oshawa@ingreathands.com

Services:

- Chiropractic Care
- Dry Blood Analysis
- Hair Analysis
- Irridology
- Massage Therapy
- Nutritional Urinalysis
- Orthotics
- Psychology
- Reflexology
- Rehabilitation
- X-Rays

Products:

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Sat.: 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
Sun.: Closed