

Safe shovelling techniques

With snow here, chiropractors offer these simple tips to help reduce the risk of pain, strain and injury from improper shoveling techniques.

?Snow shoveling, slips and falls are the top reasons for back and muscle pain in the winter,? says Dr. Brian Gushaty, a chiropractor.

?Every winter, chiropractors see an increase in back injuries due to improper lifting when shoveling snow.?

This isn't surprising when you consider that one shovelful of snow can weigh three to five kilograms. Combine that weight with improper shoveling technique and it's a recipe for pain and injury.

?Back problems often surface during the weather, especially for individuals who are unaccustomed to regular strenuous physical activity,? says Dr. Gushaty.

The following safety tips can help prevent back pain and injury this winter:

? Warm up. Before beginning any snow removal or strenuous winter activity, warm up for five to 10 minutes to get the joints moving and increase blood circulation.

? Don't let the snow pile up. Removing small amounts of snow on a frequent basis is less strenuous in the long run.

? Pick the right shovel. Use a lightweight, push style shovel. If you use a metal shovel, spray it with a non stick spray so snow slides off easily.

? Push, don't throw. Push the snow to one side and avoid throwing it as much as possible. If you have to throw, avoid twisting and turning ? position yourself to throw straight at the snow pile.

? Bend your knees. Use your knees, leg and arm muscles to do the pushing and lifting while keeping your back straight.

? Watch the ice. Course sand, ice salt, ice melt or even kitty litter can give your walk and driveway more traction, reducing the risk of a slip or fall.

? Wear proper footwear. Shoes and boots with solid treads on the soles can help to minimize the risk of slips and falls.

? Take a break. If you feel tired or short of breath, stop and take a rest. Stop shoveling immediately if you feel chest or back pain.