



**Monadnock
Orthopaedic
Associates, P.C.**

458 Old Street Road
Wellness Center, Suite 200
Peterborough, NH 03458

phone: 603.924.2144
fax: 603.924.3993

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: December 8, 2008

Contact: Patrick Stark, Monadnock Orthopaedic Associates (603) 924-2144
pstark@monadnockortho.com

Oh, The Weather Outside is Frightful

Don't let snow shoveling ruin your winter wonderland

Peterborough, NH

Snow shoveling tends to be an unpleasant task—this tiring seasonal chore may result in serious injury if you do not take the right precautions. Here are some recommendations to help you stay safe while clearing snow so you can still have some winter fun.

According to the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission:

- In 2006, more than 31,000 people were treated in hospital emergency rooms, doctors' offices, clinics and other medical settings for injuries sustained while shoveling or otherwise removing ice and snow manually.
- More than 5,000 were injured using snowblowers.
- Types of injuries can include sprains and strains, particularly in the back and shoulders, as well as lacerations and finger amputations.

"People tend to think of snow removal as just another household task, but it really involves a lot of bending and heavy lifting," says W. Bradley White, M.D., orthopaedic surgeon with Monadnock Orthopaedic Associates at Monadnock Community Hospital. "It can be especially dangerous for people who do not regularly exercise, as their bodies are not prepared for that level of activity."

Dr. White suggests the following strategies to prevent injuries while shoveling and using a snowblower:

- Check with your doctor. Because this activity places high stress on the heart, speak with your physician first. If you have a medical condition or do not exercise regularly, consider hiring someone to remove the snow.
- Dress appropriately. Light, layered, water-repellent clothing provides both ventilation and insulation. It is also important to wear the appropriate head

coverings, as well as mittens or gloves and thick, warm socks. Take a break if you feel yourself getting too hot or too cold.

- See what you are shoveling/snow blowing. Make sure that your hat or scarf does not block your vision. Watch for ice patches and uneven surfaces. Avoid falls by wearing shoes or boots that have slip-resistant soles.
- Clear snow early and often. Begin when a light covering of snow is on the ground to avoid trying to clear packed, heavy snow.

Shoveling:

- Warm up your muscles. Shoveling can be a vigorous activity. Before you begin, warm up your muscles for 10 minutes with light exercise. Be sure to include your leg muscles—heart attacks and similar injuries are sometimes the result of working the smaller muscles of your arms and back while not using the large muscle groups of the legs.
- Pace yourself. Take frequent breaks and replenish fluids to prevent dehydration. If you experience chest pain, shortness of breath or other signs of a heart attack, seek emergency care, such as by calling 9-1-1.
- Use a shovel that is comfortable for your height and strength. Do not use a shovel that is too heavy or too long for you. Consider buying a shovel that is specially designed to prevent too much stooping. Space your hands on the tool grip to increase your leverage.
- Push the snow instead of lifting it, as much as you can. If you must lift, take small amounts of snow, and lift it with your legs: Squat with your legs apart, knees bent and back straight. Lift by straightening your legs, without bending at the waist. Then walk to where you want to dump the snow; holding a shovelful of snow with your arms outstretched puts too much weight on your spine.
- Do not throw the snow over your shoulder or to the side. This requires a twisting motion that stresses your back.

Snowblowing:

- Never stick your hands in the snow blower! If snow becomes too impacted, stop the engine and wait at least five seconds. Use a solid object to clear wet snow or debris from the chute. Beware of the recoil of the motor and blades after the machine has been turned off.
- Do not leave the snow blower unattended when it is running. Shut off the engine if you must walk away from the machine.
- Watch the snow blower cord. If you are operating an electric snow blower, be aware of where the power cord is at all times.
- Add fuel before starting the snow blower. Never add fuel when the engine is running or hot. Do not operate the machine in an enclosed area.
- Read the instruction manual. Prior to using a snow blower, read the instruction manual for specific safety hazards, unfamiliar features, and whenever attempting to repair or maintain the snow blower.

###