



## Let it Snow! Let it Snow! Let it Snow!

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After spending four years in Arizona I have been spending some time getting reacquainted with an old friend, snow. With nearly a foot on the ground and more expected in the forecast I thought what better time than to talk about things to consider before shoveling.

As anyone who has ever picked up a snow shovel knows, it is WORK. In 1996, the Surgeon General noted that shoveling snow for 15 minutes was considered moderate physical activity equivalent to speed walking at 5 mph for 15 minutes on a treadmill. As with any other physical activity, a warm up is always important. When completing a warm up I encourage an active motion that is similar to the movement that you will be doing. In this case I suggest a lunge with arm reach toward the opposite knee (see picture). Perform 10 lunges on both sides. This will help emphasize the need to bend with your legs, increase muscle activity, and provide a nice warm up before you ask your legs to lift a load.



After the lunges, I also encourage some light stretching of the shoulders, neck and low back. Good stretches to complete include pulling your arm across your chest, looking over your shoulder and seated rotational stretches for your low back. Hold the stretch for 20 seconds and repeat 2-3 times. Now let us get to the most important thing.

How to position yourself when shoveling:

1. Bend your knees like you are going to lunge.
2. DO NOT reach your arms forward when shoveling, LUNGE forward. This reduces strain on your back.
3. Move forward into the lunge as you lift the snow and bring your arms back in to your abdomen. This will force you to use your legs more and reduce strain on your back bringing the weight closer to your body.
4. When throwing the snow off to the side, move your feet and DO NOT simply twist at the waist. Avoiding twisting will reduce the possibility of straining your back.
5. Push opposed to lifting: If you can push the snow forward opposed to lifting this will reduce the strain on your back.



Other things to consider:

1. Stay hydrated. Just because it is winter doesn't mean you don't get dehydrated.
2. Choose an appropriate shovel size and DO NOT overload it!
3. Take a break when needed. If we get 10 inches, shovel in sections and not all at once.

If all else fails, my last recommendation is a good snow blower. Merry Christmas and happy shoveling!!!