

HSHS Illinois Provides Tips For Shoveling Snow

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SPRINGFIELD — With the upcoming winter storm, HSHS Illinois recommends a few safety tips before you shovel snow to clear your sidewalks and driveways.

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), about 11,500 people visit the emergency room each year to treat injuries received while shoveling snow. “Shoveling snow can be a strenuous activity, particularly because cold weather can be taxing on the body,” says Dr. Gurpreet Mander, HSHS Illinois chief physician executive. “There is a potential for exhaustion, dehydration, back injuries and even heart attacks.”

Keeping your driveway and walkway clear of snow and ice is in most cases a necessity and will help prevent falls this winter. HSHS Illinois wants you to keep the below tips in mind when you shovel snow.

- **Know if you shouldn't shovel.** Certain people should avoid shoveling snow. If you have a history of heart problems, you should avoid this activity.
- **Dress appropriately.** Wear light clothing in layers to provide both ventilation and insulation. To keep warm, wear a hat, gloves and thick socks. Avoid falls by wearing shoes or boots with slip-resistant soles.
- **Warm up first.** Before you begin shoveling the snow, warm up your muscles for approximately 10 minutes by doing stretches or other light exercises.
- **Use proper equipment.** 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. Space your hands on the tool grip to increase your leverage.
- **Lift snow correctly.** Try to push the snow instead of lifting it. If you must lift, do it properly. Squat with your legs apart, knees bent and back straight. Lift with your legs. Avoid bending at the waist. Scoop small amounts of snow into the shovel and walk with your arms close to your body to where you want to dump it. Holding a shovelful of snow with your arms outstretched puts too much weight on your spine. Never remove deep snow all at once. Do it in pieces.
- **Avoid overexerting yourself.** Be very careful not to overexert yourself as you work. Pace yourself and take breaks often. It's a good idea to go indoors to warm up. Taking five to 10 minutes to relax gives your body time to rest. Pay attention to the signals your body is sending. If you feel pain or pressure in your chest, call your doctor right away or dial 911.
- **Choose chemical products carefully.** Putting a layer of rock salt (sodium chloride) on icy areas is an effective way to melt the ice. However, rock salt can cause damage to concrete and metal surfaces, and is also harmful to plants. Magnesium chloride is less corrosive than other chemical products and works well for melting ice. Read the labels carefully before using any ice-melting products.

In addition to following these snow removal safety tips, it is always best to check with your doctor to make sure that it is all right for you to shovel snow. If you have a medical condition or are not used to strenuous exercise, you should not remove the snow yourself. It is much safer to have someone else remove it for you. If you are shoveling snow or using a snow blower and experience chest pain, stop immediately and seek medical help.

For more information, please visit <https://www.nsc.org/community-safety/safety-topics/seasonal-safety/winter-safety/snow-shoveling>.

About HSHS Illinois

HSHS Illinois' mission is to reveal and embody Christ's healing love for all people through our high-quality Franciscan health care ministry. HSHS Illinois hospitals provide state-of-the-art health care to our patients and are dedicated to serving all people, especially the most vulnerable. HSHS Illinois includes St. Joseph's Hospital in Breese, St. Mary's Hospital in Decatur, St. Anthony's Memorial Hospital in Effingham, Holy Family Hospital in Greenville, St. Joseph's Hospital Highland, St. Francis Hospital in Litchfield, St. Elizabeth's Hospital in O'Fallon, Good Shepherd Hospital in Shelbyville and St. John's Hospital Springfield. St. John's College is also part of HSHS Illinois. For more information, visit www.hshs.org.