

# Tips for an injury free 2015 Chicago winter



*By Chicago Chiropractic & Sports Medicine*

Whether or not we are willing to accept it, another Chicago winter is upon us. Being the responsible citizens that we are means hours of shoveling snow, breaking up ice sheets, digging out cars and getting a free workout pushing them out of a valuable parking spot. All this activity presents significantly higher risks for back injuries. Coupled with the tendency in winter for people to hibernate while feasting on their favorite comfort foods, we have a perfect set up for injury.

So, how do we avoid these injuries? The advice is simple but effective. Follow these important winter tactics to navigate your way through whatever the polar vortex or El Niño has to throw at this fine city.

## **SHOVELING TIPS**

1. Always warm up before shoveling. Spend 5-10 minutes performing your favorite dynamic stretches. Don't just jump out of bed or off the couch and into the snow. Examples of dynamic stretches include wall slides, shoulder circles, windmills on the floor, lunges with a twist, and high knees. Dynamic stretching increases body awareness and lowers risk of injury.
2. If you are older or have health issues, find someone young and naive to do the work. This is pretty self-explanatory, but have them read this article first.
3. Keep upright, engage your core with abdominal bracing,

and lift with your legs. Slouching over while pushing/pulling/lifting the shovel full of snow is one of the worse possible activities for your low back. Avoid strains/sprains and disc herniation by driving the shovel through the snow with your back upright and core engaged, then lift with your legs. Keep your knees slightly bent in an athletic stance to allow you to keep your back upright and core engaged.

4. Lift lighter shovel loads of snow. This may seem like common sense, but when in the moment and trying to get the job done, you may get carried away by lifting too much weight at once. If the shovel is too heavy, your form will suffer, and injury can result.
5. If you have any health issues that you think may prevent you from following these tips, consult your healthcare provider.
6. Stay fit and healthy. Don't allow the snow to beat you into submission. Maintain a healthy lifestyle by making healthy dietary choices and maintaining a workout regimen. Not only will you avoid winter related injuries, but you will be able to kick those winter blues. Snow is not an excuse to gorge on Lou Malnati's and binge watch House of Cards. Getting out of your comfort zone will pay big dividends come spring, when you don't dread fitting into your summer gear from last year.