

We bring out the ***Best in you***

THINK ***HEART SAFETY*** WHILE SHOVELING SNOW

You've heard the stories: every winter someone suffers a heart attack, some serious or even fatal, while shoveling snow. Like it or not, snowfall is a fact of New England life. Along with the scenic beauty and outdoor fun of fresh snow comes the chore of shoveling steps, walkways, driveways and sidewalks. Clearing the snow helps visitors and delivery personnel avoid injury on your property – but it's just as important to shovel safely so you stay healthy, too.

How can snow shoveling bring on a heart attack? Compared to jogging or cross-country skiing, shoveling snow requires limited physical activity. However, it does increase demands on your heart. The strain of shoveling can cause both heart rate and blood pressure to rise rapidly, especially if the snow is wet and heavy. The cold air doesn't help either: The body's natural reflex when it's exposed to the cold is to constrict arteries and blood vessels. This natural response, especially if combined with a pre-existing cardiac condition, can create serious trouble.

The vast majority of people who go out to shovel their sidewalk, of course, will not have a heart attack. People who have already had a heart attack, or have a history of heart disease, angina or high blood pressure should use extra caution when approaching the task. Better yet, have this chore done for you!

If you are going to dig in, follow these guidelines for safe snow shoveling:

- Be sure to dress warmly, covering your head, neck and chest.
- Cut the icy cold by breathing through a scarf.
- Take your time. Shovel in 15-minute intervals.
- Lift small amounts of snow and take frequent breaks.
- Use the correctly sized and designed shovel – a smaller shovel will cut down the strain on your heart by not allowing you to lift a heavy load.
- ***If you start to experience any chest discomfort, shortness of breath or unusual symptom, call your doctor or seek medical attention right away!***

