



PRESS RELEASE FOR LOCAL MEDIA

Central Michigan District Health Department

"Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities"

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To: Local Newspaper

From: Dan Lowery, Health Educator

RE: Snow Safety/ Shoveling

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Snow Safety/ Shoveling

Michigan's winter weather season is just around the corner. It is a beautiful time of year to enjoy. Cold weather, snow and ice all lead to a variety of activities, sports and adventure that you can't get outdoors during the other three seasons. A few precautions need to be taken though in order to avoid accidents or dangerous situations due to the cold, wet, and windy conditions that winter can bring.

To stay safe in winter weather:

- Stay current on weather reports and updates
- Do not travel in low visibility conditions
- Keep a shovel and blanket in your vehicle along with your first aid or emergency kit
- Limit being in a rush or hurrying; make sure you leave yourself extra time for traveling
- Wear proper footwear with good traction
- Dress warmly and layer clothing, remember mittens keep fingers warmer than gloves, scarves prevent wind chilling your neck, and hats keep heat loss from your head to a minimum
- Be alert for black ice when walking or driving
- Keep snow and ice off footpaths, sidewalks, and driveways

Shoveling can be good exercise for those who are physically fit and able to do so.

Persons who shouldn't shovel snow:

- Former heart attack victims
- Persons who have heart disease
- Persons with high blood pressure
- Persons with high cholesterol

- Smokers
- Persons with a sedentary (non-active) lifestyle

People who find themselves on this list are encouraged to consult your doctor about these lifestyle factors to get them addressed, so that by next year you can be ready to shovel snow.

Know the signs and symptoms of a heart attack, so that if they are observed you or someone else can call 9-1-1 and get the appropriate medical attention.

The five major symptoms of a heart attack are:

- Pain or discomfort in the jaw, neck, or back
- Feeling weak, light-headed, or faint
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Pain or discomfort in arms or shoulder
- Shortness of breath

For men between 35-49 years of age the risk of heart attack rates can double or triple in regards to the number of heart attacks related to shoveling snow. Cold weather causes your blood vessels and arteries to become smaller; causing the heart to work harder to pump blood and oxygen to your body, combined with the extra work put on your heart by shoveling. Chances of a blood clot forming are also increased.

If you plan on shoveling snow remember these tips:

- Avoid drinking caffeinated drinks
- Do not smoke before or while shoveling snow

Stretching muscles before shoveling will limber up the muscles you will be using, including: the biceps in your arms; the hamstrings, thighs, and calves which are located in the legs; and your lower back. Make sure to use your legs when shoveling. To help reduce the strain on your lower back, step into pushing the snow. Use your legs to lift the shovel and avoid bending over which can cause back strain. Use an ergonomically designed shovel (the handle is bent or angled), which was designed to reduce back strain. While shoveling, drink plenty of fluids and take frequent breaks. Dressing in layers will help you to shed clothing when shoveling to avoid overheating and limit fluid loss through sweating

Winter can be a wonderful season. Follow these recommendations to help prepare and enjoy the season.

This article has been brought to you by the Central Michigan District Health Department serving the residents of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola, and Roscommon counties.

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