

Protect your back when shoveling snow

Have you ever heaved a shovelful of wet snow and suddenly felt a stabbing pain in the back?

According to Dr. John Cowan of Chiropractic First America, the chances are you lifted too much, the wrong way.

Dr. Cowan said, "a heaping shovelful of snow can put 150 pounds or more of pressure on the disks in your lower back. This usually causes a great amount of pain, both in the back and

down the legs. The lowest disk in the spine carries much of the body's weight and is often the site of back problems."

This winter, incorrect shoveling will again cause pain and injury for many people, in the low back and limbs. "Lifting a heaping shovel of snow without bending the knees can subject the spine to severe stress," cautions Cowan. A shovel of wet snow weighing 10 to 15 pounds held in front of the body can increase the pressure on the

lowest (lumbosacral) disk by 15 times the weight lifted," Cowan added.

In addition to back pain and sciatica (shooting pains down the legs) poor shoveling techniques can trigger a burning, tingling, numbness or pain down the neck, shoulder and arm.

The heart also handles a big load while shoveling. Exertion and frigid air can put a burden on the cardiovascular system.

To help avoid back and limb pain and

damage this winter, CFA recommends these 10 safety tips:

- Don't shovel if you've had serious spinal, lung or heart conditions or are out of shape.
- Do simple warm-up exercises to limber up before shoveling.
- Dress warmly; wear an extra-long sweater to protect the low back muscles from cold air.
- Always stand erect, bend from the knees, not from the waist; handle small to moderate loads at a time.

- Push rather than lift the snow where possible; deposit it close by instead of throwing it over a wide area.
- Use your arms, legs, feet and thighs in coordinated movement to deposit snow.
- Change grip and stance often to avoid overusing the stronger side of your body.
- Pace yourself, don't overexert, and rest frequently.
- Don't shovel in extremely frigid weather.
- If your health is a risk factor, don't take a chance; ask your neighborhood youngsters to shovel for you.

YMCA highlights

These YMCA highlights appear courtesy of the Farmington YMCA, 28100 Farmington Road, Farmington Hills. For information, call 552-0020.

HOLIDAY MEMBERSHIP — Are you home for the holidays? College students can take advantage of this special priced membership for \$25. This special short-term membership is valid through Jan. 19.

Each student will have use of the swimming pool, track, gym and weight room according to activity schedules. Racquetball court time can also be reserved for a small fee.

CHRISTMAS CAMP — Boys and girls ages 6-10 years can enjoy their time off from school at the YMCA. Ac-

tivities take place 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Dec. 23, 24, 26, 27, 30, 31 and Jan. 2 and 3. Children will enjoy well-supervised activities, such as swimming, field trips, movies, outdoor play and more. Fee is \$75 for members and \$112 for non-members. Space is limited.

CHRISTMAS SLEEPOVER — A Christmas party that goes on forever. Friday, Dec. 20 from 8 p.m. through Saturday, Dec. 21, 8 a.m. Boys and girls, ages 6-10, should bring a \$1 gift to exchange, sleeping bag, pajamas, toothbrush, swim suit and towel. Fee for members is \$10 and \$15 for non-members.

NEW YEAR'S EVE — Our fourth annual New Year's celebration is just around the corner. Boys and girls, ages

6-10, are invited to spend New Year's Eve with us at the YMCA. Registration is being accepted at the Y. The party begins at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 31, and children must be picked up by 9:30 a.m. Jan. 1. Party goers should bring a baby picture with their name on the back, sleeping bag, pajamas, toothbrush, swim suit and towel. Fee for members is \$12 and \$18 for non-members.

YMCA CLOSED — The Farmington Area YMCA will be closed Christmas Day (Dec. 25) and New Year's Day (Jan. 1). We will be closing at 4 p.m. on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

On behalf of the Farmington YMCA staff, we want to thank you for your patronage this past year and would like to wish you and yours a joyous holiday season.

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