

Our backs are susceptible to injury by many stresses including: stepping off a curb, bending down, lifting heavy objects, and even coughing or sneezing. According to Statistics Canada, four out of five adults will experience at least one episode of back pain at some time in their lives... most often between the ages of 30 and 50. The most common cause of back injuries in the winter months is shoveling.

We often shovel before our bodies are properly warmed up and ready for such a rigorous exercise; when we drive home from work (where we have been sitting most of the day) or when we wake up on a weekend morning. It is best to do simple stretches and exercises before shoveling. All you need are five minutes to prevent an injury which could last days or weeks.

**Before You Shovel**

Squat exercises target the hamstrings, quadriceps, abs, buttocks and back. Place your



By: Katie Wolk, RMT

# Prevent Back Injury During Shovelling Season

feet hip width apart, weight in your heels and hands on hips or head. Go only as low as you can without lifting your heels off the ground. Engage your abs. Do 15 slow squats.

Cat and cow stretches warm up your back muscles. Get onto all

fours. Tuck your pelvis and chin under (looking at your belly) and round out your back. Then stick your bum out and look up, creating an arch in your back. Hold each movement for three to five seconds and alternate for about one minute.

Finally, jog or march on the spot for a minute to get your body warmed up.

**While You Shovel**

Use the handle as a lever and rest it on your thighs with bent knees (in a squat position) to help lift the snow. This helps to stabilize your back.

Avoid twisting. Think about where your toes are pointing. If you look away from your toes, you are twisting your back. Try and keep your nose and toes in alignment.

**After You Shovel**

Take a 10-minute hot shower to relieve any muscle tension that has built up during your workout.

**ASK THE EXPERT:**

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