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F OR JANUARY 1st RELEASE

Snow Shoveling and Snow Blowing Safety

As winter approaches, our images of the first snowfall remind us of outdoor tasks, such as snow shoveling and snow blowing. “By following some simple safety precautions, cold weather tasks can be accomplished safely and without injuries,” as per the Otsego County Department of Health.

Most importantly, older people and people with back problems should never attempt to shovel snow. An older person has a greater risk of slipping on ice or snow and causing injury.

It’s important to stretch and warm up your muscles before you begin shoveling. Many back injuries occur in the morning, because the tissue around the spine is tight after a night of rest. Ironically, people between the ages of 20 and 50 are more likely than older individuals to injure their backs, because they may not be aware that they are out of condition.

The Otsego County Department of Health suggests the following shoveling tips to prevent back injury and strain:

- Use a proper snow shovel.
- Take small loads of snow, bend at the knees and lift with your leg muscles, not your back.
- Scoop in a forward motion, and step in the direction you throw the snow.
- Avoid twisting which puts additional strain on your back.
- Take frequent breaks. Stand up and walk around after every 10 minutes of snow shoveling.

Snow shoveling is extremely hard work. Do not shovel snow unless you are in good physical condition. Cold weather, without any physical exertion, puts additional strain on your heart. People who are overweight, have heart problems or have high blood pressure are at high risk for injuries when snow shoveling.

Failing to take proper precautions while using a snow blower is another leading cause of injury during the winter season.

The Otsego County Department of Health suggests the following steps to help you avoid injury while using a snow blower:

- Read the owner’s manual thoroughly before operating the snow blower.
- Keep both feet firmly on the ground while starting the snow blower.
- Remove obstacles from your path, and aim the snow carefully.

For more information on shoveling and snow blowing safety call:

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