



# Rhode Island Athletic Trainers ASSOCIATION

Rhode Island Athletic Trainers' Association

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **RHODE ISLAND ATHLETIC TRAINERS' ASSOCIATION (RIATA) OFFERS TIPS ON HOW TO SHOVEL SAFELY THROUGHOUT THE BLIZZARD OF 2005**

**PROVIDENCE, RI** – The blizzard of 2005 in Rhode Island may be a pretty sight to some, but cleaning up can be very physically challenging. To help kids and adults alike avoid injury while shoveling snow, the Rhode Island Athletic Trainers' Association (RIATA) has compiled the following suggestions:

#### **PEOPLE WHO SHOULD AVOID SHOVELING SHOW**

- Sufferers of angina, other heart conditions and hypertension
- Those experiencing low back or neck pain
- Anyone physically out-of-shape

#### **WHAT TO DO BEFORE SHOVELING**

- Warm up by stretching your back and exercising your abdominals, legs and upper body muscles.
- Eat a healthy snack and drink water or a sports drink before shoveling to ensure you have adequate energy. Replenishing fluids and staying hydrated is extremely important, no matter how cold it is outside.
- Don't overdress because you'll warm up quickly. Wear boots, long johns, coveralls, undershirts made with "Dri-Fit" material (which will wick sweat from the skin), a sweatshirt, jacket, gloves, a hat, UV protectant sunglasses and sunscreen.

#### **WHILE SHOVELING**

- Pace yourself, especially if the area you're shoveling is large, or you haven't been physically active in a while.
- Shovel for 5-10 minutes at a time, then rest to catch your breath and stretch your lower back, neck and shoulders.
- Use a shovel with a long handle to give you more control. Shovels with short handles are likely to increase the amount you bend your back and neck, causing low back and neck pain.
- For those not used to heavy physical activity, take half scoops rather than full scoops of snow.
- Be square to the shovel — your feet and shoulders should "face" the shovel. Keep your legs slightly bent to keep your back relatively straight. Use your legs to push the shovel into the snow. Once you have a shovelful, grasp the shovel with one hand as close to the blade as you can, with the other hand positioned about three-quarters of the way up the handle. Pivot or move your feet to face the area where you want to place the snow. Do not twist the shovel, as this will torque your lower back.
- Keep in mind that water content of snow varies from region to region. Water content in the west is usually less than in the east or northeast: a shovel of snow in the west will likely feel lighter than that of other regions, so judge your scoops of snow carefully.
- When shoveling snow is performed correctly, your legs and arms should feel the brunt of soreness, not your lower back.
- If you're using a snow blower, consider one that is self-propelled as it will limit the amount of pushing you'll have to do. Should you choose a hand-held version, be sure it "fits" according to the manufacturer's instructions.

#### **AFTER SHOVELING**

- Soreness is likely to be at its greatest 24-48 hours after shoveling. If you feel sore, do some light exercises. Keep active, and the soreness should be minimal.
- Ice and pain relievers such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen may be helpful.
- Use heat 24 hours later if needed. Otherwise, it will add to any swelling you may have experienced.

"Snow shoveling can be a great workout as long as you take adequate precautions to ensure you're fit and able to get the job done," says Andy Llaguno, ATC, assistant athletic trainer at the University of Rhode Island; and president, Rhode Island Athletic Trainers' Association. "Use proper form, shovel in moderation and listen to your body should you have any soreness after a productive day's work."

#### **About the RIATA:**

Certified athletic trainers (ATCs) are unique health care providers who specialize in the prevention, assessment, treatment and rehabilitation of injuries and illnesses that occur to athletes and the physically active. Visit our website at [www.riathletictrainers.org](http://www.riathletictrainers.org) for more information.

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