

ER doctor offers tips for safer snow shoveling

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(HealthDay)—If you're a middle-aged couch potato, shoveling snow

could put you at risk for a heart attack.

While shoveling isn't dangerous for many people, certain people are at higher risk. The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends that people should check with a doctor first if they don't get [regular exercise](#), have a [medical condition](#) or are middle-aged or older.

If you must shovel, know the symptoms of a heart attack. Symptoms include: pain in the chest, arm(s), back, neck, jaw or stomach; a cold sweat; shortness of breath; nausea; lightheadedness; and uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness in the center of your chest.

"If you are concerned that you may be having a heart attack, you should not hesitate about seeking medical treatment—every minute is crucial when experiencing a [heart attack](#)," said Dr. George Becker. He is director of the emergency department at The Valley Hospital in Ridgewood, N.J.

"Call 911 immediately or head directly to the closest emergency room," Becker said in a hospital news release.

The heart association offers these tips for safer shoveling:

- Take frequent rest breaks.
- Use a small shovel.
- Don't eat a big meal or drink alcohol before or soon after [shoveling](#).
- Be alert for signs of hypothermia, a dangerous drop in body temperature. Symptoms include shivering; slow, shallow breathing; confusion; loss of coordination; exhaustion; and a slow, weak pulse.

You might also want to consider using a snowblower instead of a shovel,

the news release suggests.

More information: The National Safety Council has more on [snow shoveling safety](#).

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