

# Flakes are falling again: Here's the safe way to shovel snow

November 25 2022, by Cara Murez

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Shoveling snow is a strenuous workout that poses risks for people with

heart conditions.

"We have to think of shoveling [snow](#) as a pretty significant exertion, like an exercise," said [Dr. Donald Ford](#), chair of family medicine at the Cleveland Clinic, in Ohio. "So if you're going out to [exercise](#), people who have heart conditions or people who have risk for [heart conditions](#), may need to talk to their doctor before they engage in that."

That includes folks with [risk factors](#) such as [high blood pressure](#), high cholesterol and diabetes, Ford said. The doctor can advise whether shoveling is safe, and if so, how much.

If you do get the go-ahead, taking frequent rest breaks is a good idea, Ford said in a clinic news release.

Even if you're in shape, warm up before your first scoop. Stretch out the muscles of the back, arms, shoulders and legs.

Do a brief aerobic warmup to get the blood flowing, such as walking in place, hopping up and down, or even spending a few minutes on the treadmill, he suggested.

Once you're outside, lift with your legs—not your back.

"Make sure you're lifting from the center. Keeping your body upright, not reaching over," Ford said.

Using an ergonomic shovel, which has a longer, bent handle, will help prevent back pain, he noted. It enables a shoveler to stand straighter and not bend over as far.

"Make sure that you can throw the snow in front of you," Ford advised. "Don't try to throw it over your shoulder or to the side because that's

when people really start to get those back injuries, shoulder injuries, and so forth."

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

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