



Can shoveling cause a heart attack??

YES! Snow shoveling can strain the heart enough to cause a heart attack.

Shoveling, even pushing a heavy snow blower, can cause a sudden increase in blood pressure and heart rate. Combine that with cold air and holding your breath during shoveling, both which cause your arteries to constrict decreasing blood flow and oxygen to the heart, can trigger a heart attack. One study found that when healthy young men shoveled snow, their heart rate and blood pressure increased more than when they exercised on a treadmill. Also most shoveling is done between 6-10 am when cardiac risks are higher.

TIPS FOR PROTECTING YOUR **HEART**

| Before you shovel | While you shovel | Signs of a heart attack |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid shoveling immediately after you awaken, most heart attacks occur early in the morning when blood is more prone to clotting. Wait for at least 30 minutes and warm up. • Do not eat heavy meal before shoveling: blood gets diverted from the heart to the stomach. • Warm up your muscles before starting by walking for a few minutes or marching in place. • Do not drink coffee or smoke for at least one hour before or one hour after shoveling or during breaks. These are stimulants and elevate your blood pressure and heart rate. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shovel small amounts of snow at a time and bend with your knees. • Try to shovel fresh snow before it becomes wet and heavy. (wet snow can weigh up to 20lbs/shovelful) • Use an ergonomically correct shovel with a curved handle and try a plastic vs. metal shovel as it will be lighter. • Take frequent breaks. • Drink plenty of water. • Dress in layers and cover your mouth (breathing cold air can cause angina or breathing problems). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Squeezing pain in the chest. • Shortness of breath. • Lightheadedness or dizziness. • Pain or burning that radiates up to the left shoulder or down the left arm. • May also include jaw pain, lower back pain, unexplained fatigue or nausea, and anxiety. • If you think you are having a heart attack call 911. |