It happens every winter at Colby: Snow falls, usually leaving piles of the stuff for PPD to clear from campus sidewalks and roadways. Consider the following before you grab your shovel after our first nor'easter:

The two primary hazards related to snow shoveling are:

**Heart Attack Risk:**
The boosted heart rate from shoveling combined with the artery-constricting cold air make "a perfect storm" for a heart attack.

**Ergonomic Risks:**
Shoveling snow places significant strain on your back, shoulders, and arms.

How to Protect Yourself:

- Be sure your muscles are warm before you start shoveling. Cold, tight muscles are more likely to sprain or strain than warm, relaxed muscles.
- Choose a snow shovel that is right for you/right for the job!
  - Use curved handles, as this enables you to keep your back straighter when shoveling.
  - Obtain a shovel with an appropriate length handle. The length is correct when you can slightly bend your knees, flex your back 10 degrees or less, and hold the shovel comfortably in your hands at the start of the "shoveling stroke."
  - A plastic shovel blade will generally be lighter than a metal one, thus putting less strain on your spine.
  - Sometimes, a smaller blade is better than a larger blade. Heavy wet snow can weigh as much as 25 pounds per shovel full.
- Pace yourself by taking frequent breaks to gently stretch your back, arms, and legs.
- Use a snow-blower (or plow). When used correctly, a snow-blower will put far less strain on your back than snow shoveling.
- **If you experience pain of any kind, stop immediately and seek assistance.**
**Snow Shoveling**

**Shoveling Tips & Techniques:**

- Push the snow, do not lift it. Pushing takes less effort and puts far less strain on the spine than lifting.
- If you must lift the snow, lift it properly with good technique.
  - Squat with your legs apart, knees bent, and back straight.
  - Lift with your legs. Do not bend at the waist.
  - Scoop small amounts of snow into the shovel, and walk to where you want to dump it.
  - Never remove deep snow all at once; do it piecemeal. Shovel an inch or two, then take another inch off. Rest and repeat if necessary.
- Move your feet rather than twisting at the waist, and never throw snow over your shoulder.

**The Numbers:**

- **100** Americans die each year for shoveling related heart attacks
- **55** and older employees are almost 5 times more likely to have heart problems from shoveling than younger workers
- **11,000** Average number of Americans who go to the emergency room each year due to snow shoveling
Review / Discussion Questions:

1. What are the two primary risks related to snow shoveling? Which one concerns you more, and why?
2. What are some techniques to prevent injuries when shoveling?
3. What is a safer behavior: using a large shovel and getting the job done quickly or taking more time with a smaller shovel? Why?
4. Discuss the various shovels available at PPD and when to use them.

Printed Name

Signature

Questions, concerns or comments contact the EHS Director at extension 5504.