

PEAK SPEAK- January 2007

PEAK PERFORMANCE Fitness Center

Welcome to our newsletter!

In PEAK SPEAK you'll find general fitness info, workout ideas, nutrition tips, and news about our health club.

Feel free to forward email or printed copies of our newsletters to anyone you think might find the content interesting.

We'll keep past issues available on our web site.

If you have any questions about the content, or ideas for features, please see Joe or Pete.

In this edition:

- ***Winter Warning:
Avoiding Injuries While Shoveling Snow***
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This time, I mean it!***
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Fitness Q&A on our Web Site***
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How to Avoid Injuries While Shoveling Snow

First and foremost, please remember...

Shoveling snow can be an extremely nasty heart attack trigger. Every winter there are many sad stories about middle-aged people (mostly men who are not in good physical condition) suffering heart attacks while shoveling snow. That's because snow shoveling is an intense isometric exercise that has an effect not unlike explosive weight-lifting movements in terms of stress on the heart. Unlike jogging, which gradually raises blood pressure and heart rate, snow shoveling produces a very rapid, steep increase in both.

Throw in the potential heart-stressing effect of low temperatures, and cleaning up after a snow fall can present a serious threat. So it's worth asking your doctor during your annual physical (you DO get an annual physical, don't you?) whether shoveling snow might be too much for you.

Lower back injury is also a major risk. Shoveling snow involves repetitive bending, pushing, twisting and lifting motions- all of which can put extreme stress on the lower back.

People of ALL fitness levels need to exercise caution while shoveling snow, because the combination of high-impact isometric movements and low temperatures can lead to serious injuries.

The following common-sense tips can help minimize the risk of injury while shoveling snow.

How to Avoid Injuries While Shoveling Snow

Snow Shoveling Tips

1) Warm up!

Imagine going to the gym on a cold winter day, finding that the heating system isn't working and the temperature in the gym is below freezing. Undaunted, you walk straight to the squat rack, load up the bar with more weight than you're used to lifting, and- still bundled in your winter clothes- grab the weight and proceed to lift it repeatedly without a warm up. No one in their right mind would do that!

Well, if you think about it, that's precisely what most people do when they go out to shovel snow!

As with any type of strenuous exercise, some stretching and warming up before shoveling snow is a very good idea. Be sure to pay particular attention to hamstrings, lower back, arms and shoulders: these are the muscles that will be doing much of the work. A few knee bends, trunk rotations, hamstring stretches and shoulder rolls (extending your arms out to your sides at shoulder height, then rotating in 12-15" circles) will help get the blood flowing and get your body ready to work.

Please check with us if you'd like some suggestions for stretching/warm-up movements.

Remember: putting extreme stress on cold muscles and joints is simply a bad idea.

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Snow Shoveling Tips (continued)

2) Watch Your Breathing

In many people there is a natural tendency to hold one's breath during exertion. During heavy work like shoveling snow or lifting weights, it's important that you provide your body with the extra oxygen it needs. Be careful NOT to hold your breath while straining to push a pile of snow or lift a heavy shovel full. Breathe in before the lift (or push), then breathe out during the exertion.

3) Take Frequent Breaks

During breaks, take a quick inventory: are you out of breath, is your heart racing, is anything sore? Do NOT ignore symptoms like nausea, excessive sweating, shortness of breath and/or chest pains. Any of these symptoms can be indicative of a severe problem, and they should be taken very seriously.

4) Do NOT Lift or Push With Your Back, EVER!

Always be sure to use your legs rather than your back when pushing or lifting the snow. The best way to ensure that you keep stress off your lower back is to ALWAYS KEEP YOUR BACK STRAIGHT when pushing or lifting. Concentrate on bending at the knees instead of the waist. This will engage the large muscles in your legs (especially the quads and "glutes") that are designed for this type of work. A curved back is an invitation to trouble: so straighten up!

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Snow Shoveling Tips (continued)

5) Use the right equipment

It's a good idea to dress in layers rather than just wearing a heavy coat. This will enable you to peel off a layer when you're working and put it back on during breaks.

What about the shovel itself? Some of the newer "ergonomic" shovels (the ones with curved or z-shaped handles) are specifically designed to take strain off the lower back. They work by enabling you to remain more erect when shoveling, thereby keeping your back straight as described above. These shovels also tend to be made out of lighter material, again reducing the workload on your body.

Following these simple common-sense tips will help lessen the chance of injury while shoveling snow. Remember: BE CAREFUL, take your time and "keep an eye" on yourself!

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New Year's Resolutions: This Time, I MEAN It!

Getting in shape and/or losing weight seem to be the most common New Year's resolutions. Virtually everyone we've asked has indicated that at one time or another, they've made a New Year's resolution related to improving health and fitness.

Why is that?

We believe it's because everyone is instinctively aware that good health is the foundation that enables us to improve the quality and enjoyment of life. Fitness provides us with the energy and enthusiasm to fulfill all of our other resolutions such as spending more quality time with loved ones, being a better friend, or becoming more active in volunteer work.

Why do most "fitness" resolutions go unfulfilled?

Many people join a health club in January as part of their fitness resolution. The good news is that taking positive action like this can be a powerful first step. But too many people join a health club with great intentions, only to lose interest and become disappointed in not "sticking with it". You may have experienced this yourself: having made a fitness resolution, then taken a positive step like joining a health club and/or signed up for some personal training sessions, only to lose steam and leave the resolution unfulfilled.

The reason? Personal training sessions and health club memberships are TOOLS, not solutions!

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New Year's Resolutions: This Time, I MEAN It! (continued)

If I REALLY mean it this time, what should I do?

The most empowering step you can take is to develop a sustainable plan that drives behavioral change. To realize your fitness resolutions, you must understand that it's not about a set of training sessions or a gym membership, but rather it's about making a lifestyle change.

Working with a fitness professional to clarify your goals and design a Personalized Fitness Solution is a great way to jump start your action plan for fulfilling your Fitness Resolution. You can start TODAY by taking advantage of a Free Fitness Consultation with one of the fitness experts at Peak Performance.

For more information or to schedule a fitness consultation, please contact Pete or Joe.

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Did You Know?

Announcing *ASK PEAK:* *Fitness Q&A on our Web Site*

Beginning this month, we will be adding a new FREE Fitness Info service on our web site. We are opening up a Fitness Q&A section, in which you will now be able to post fitness-related questions that will be addressed by Pete or Joe with input from our other fitness experts as needed. We plan to build an archive of the questions and responses, particularly the most frequently-asked questions (FAQs), and make them available to visitors to our site.

Please help us get the ball rolling by submitting any fitness related questions via the [Fitness Info Exchange](#) page on our site, and visit the site frequently to review updates to the information exchange.

We continue to add to the FREE fitness information content on our site, and are pleased to share it with our members as an added value to their Peak membership. We ask that you forward links to our web site to any friends, family and co-workers who you think might benefit from the information.
