

PILATES FOR SNOW SHOVELLING

With the winter season comes snow shovelling season. While snow shovelling isn't a winter sport by choice, it needs to be done and can be a very physical activity. Depending on the consistency and amount of snow, the activity can be quite demanding. Every year there are many injuries i.e. back injuries, fractures and heart problems, due to snow shovelling. As with any physical activity, conditioning is needed to avoid injury. Before the snow comes, conditioning for shovelling can be done by working on the primary muscle groups used when shovelling.

Primary muscle groups used when snow shovelling:

- Lower back
- Arms and legs
- Shoulders
- heart

Areas of fitness developed when snow shovelling:

- Muscular capacity
- Balance
- Coordination
- Cardiorespiratory capacity
- Groups who should think twice before shovelling snow:
- Anyone who has already had a heart attack.
- Individuals with a history of heart disease.
- Those with high blood pressure or high cholesterol levels.
- Smokers.
- Individuals leading a sedentary lifestyle



With most physical activities heart rates and breathing increases gradually. Muscle actions release chemicals that cause blood vessels to dilate allowing more blood and thus oxygen to flow to working muscles. This isn't the case with shovelling snow. Most people don't warm up before shovelling snow and the cold doesn't help. The body restricts blood flow to the surface trying to conserve heat resulting in increased blood pressure.

A few tips when shovelling snow:

- Treat it as any physical activity-warm up before you start shovelling, stretch afterwards, strengthen the muscles groups that are used predominantly when shovelling i.e. legs, lower back, arms, throughout the season and beforehand.
- Take breaks periodically just as you would between sets when weight training.
- Dress in layers as you will get warm as time progresses.
- Choose the correct shovel for you. If you were skiing you wouldn't use skis that were meant for someone twice your size. Use a shovel that will suit your size and strength. The smaller the shovel the less you will have to lift at any one time.
- Always bend from the knees not the back. Tighten your core muscles to protect your lower back when lifting.

How Pilates can help.

Pilates is a great overall body workout working on toning muscles, stability, balance, coordination. The primary muscles groups used when snow shovelling can all be worked and strengthened through Pilates both on the mat and the reformer. The reformer is a great place to work the legs and upper body and use the abdominals and back muscles as stabilizers which is how they function when shovelling snow. Some of the common injuries associated with snow shovelling can also be addressed and restoration of sprained muscles or sore backs can be alleviated through regular Pilates exercises.

To find out more how Pilates and Pilates Patio can help make your winter an easier one, please contact us at 613-422-3638 or lanipilatespatio.com



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