

# Snow and ice combination leading to shoveling and slipping injuries

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At Patient First on Holland Road in Virginia Beach, they've stayed busy in the days since the snowstorm.

Part of the reason is that shoveling snow is strenuous, so it can increase blood pressure and heart rate.

"Most important thing is pay attention to how your body feels. How your breathing feels. Take breaks if you need to. Stop if you're feeling uncomfortable in anyway. You can't catch your breath. Your chest doesn't feel right or you're feeling dizzy or light headed ," Dr. Samuel Wittenberg told News 3's Todd Corillo Monday.

The Virginia Department of Health has issued the following tips to prevent snow-related injury and death:

## **Reduce Risk of Cold Temperature Injuries**

- Wear snow boots, hats, gloves and scarves; cover your mouth, if possible.
- Ensure that clothing and boots have adequate insulation.
- Dress in layers to help keep body heat in.
- Take frequent breaks out of the snow.
- Monitor the time your children are out in the cold.
- Stay dry, and if you become wet, head indoors and remove any wet clothing immediately.
- Check on others who might not be able to care for themselves.

## **Avoid Exertion**

- Cold weather puts an extra strain on the heart. If you have heart disease or high blood pressure, follow your doctor's advice about shoveling snow or performing other hard work in the cold.
- Work slowly, your body is already working hard just to stay warm, so don't overdo it.
- Do not ignore shivering; it's an important first sign that your body is losing heat. Persistent shivering is a signal to return indoors.

## **Know Signs of Frostbite**

- Frostbite is an injury to the body that is caused by freezing. Frostbite causes a loss of feeling and color in affected areas.
- It most often affects the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers or toes. Frostbite can permanently damage the body. Severe cases may result in digit or limb amputation.
- At the first signs of redness or pain in any skin area, get out of the cold or protect any exposed skin.
- Any of the following signs may indicate frostbite: a white or grayish-yellow skin area, skin that feels unusually firm or waxy, and numbness. The person is often unaware of frostbite until someone else points it out because the frozen tissues are numb.
- If you suspect symptoms of frostbite, seek medical care.

## **Know Signs of Hypothermia**

- Hypothermia is an abnormally low body temperature caused when your body is losing heat faster than it can be produced. Warning signs may include shivering, exhaustion, mental confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech or drowsiness.

- In infants, warning signs may include bright red, cold skin or very low energy. If you notice signs of hypothermia, take the person's temperature. If the body temperature is below 95 degrees, it's an emergency; seek medical attention immediately.

### **Wear Protective Gear**

- Wear earplugs or protective headphones to reduce risk from equipment noise. Equipment such as chain saws, backhoes and snow blowers may cause ringing in the ears and subsequent hearing damage.
- Wear eye goggles while removing or cleaning up debris to prevent eye injuries.

### **Prevent Muscle and Bone Injury**

- Use teams of two or more to move bulky objects.
- Avoid lifting any material that weighs more than 50 pounds.
- Use proper automated-assist lifting devices.
- Use caution or seek professional assistance when removing fallen trees, cleaning up debris or using equipment, such as chain saws.
- Wear eye goggles while removing or cleaning up debris to prevent eye injuries.

### **Avoid Carbon Monoxide**

- Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas that is poisonous to breathe.
- During snow cleanup, operate all gasoline-powered devices such as generators outdoors and never bring them indoors. This will help to ensure your safety from carbon monoxide poisoning.

### **Beware of Electrical Hazards**

- If snow/water is present anywhere near electrical circuits and electrical equipment, turn off the power at the main breaker or fuse on the service panel. Do not turn the power back on until electrical equipment has been inspected by a qualified electrician.
- Never touch electrical equipment if the ground is wet, unless you are certain that the power is off.
- *Never touch a downed power line.*
- When using gasoline and diesel generators to supply power to a building, switch the main breaker or fuse on the service panel to the off position prior to starting the generator.
- If clearing or other work must be performed near a downed power line, contact the utility company to discuss de-energizing and grounding or shielding of power lines.
- Extreme caution is necessary when moving ladders and other equipment near overhead power lines to avoid inadvertent contact.