

Shovel Safety

Protect yourself from injury at work or at home.

Most people think that there isn't much to using a shovel. However, even the most "seasoned" worker might not know the proper techniques to preventing back injury when digging. Remember this statistic: Back injuries are the second leading cause of missing work next to colds and flu. So before you grab any old shovel to remove snow from the driveway at home or while on the job, remember these tips!

Proper shoveling technique

- Warm up your joints and muscles before getting into the dig through light exercises.
- Keep your stance wide and place one foot forward near the shovel. Place your weight on that foot to push the shovel forward.
- Keep your knees flexed and bent slightly. Lift with the legs, not the back.
- Do not overload your blade - be cautious of the weight of the load.
- For faster shoveling rates (15 scoops per minute), the load should not exceed 7kg (15lbs).
- Keep the load close to the body.
- Turn your feet in the direction of where you want to throw the load.
- Do not twist your back or toss the load over your shoulder.
- Keep the throw height less than 4 feet (1.3 meters)

Quick digging tips:

Plan ahead



Find out what materials you will be digging and what might be underneath (like power cables). Make sure you choose the right shovel for the load.

Wear protective clothing



Wear proper protective clothing - particularly the right work boots, gloves and long pants if necessary.

Take breaks



Always take a break approximately every 15 minutes to give your body a rest!

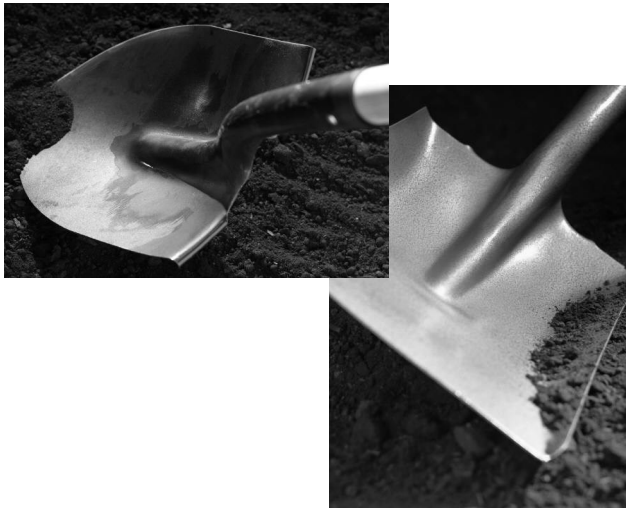


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Selecting a safe shovel

Good shovel design

- A lighter shovel will reduce the muscular effort required to dig.
- The handle should be designed to grip without hurting the hands.



Choose the right shovel for the job

- A longer handle eases the strain on the back, reducing bending, and works well when you need a spade to dig holes.
- Square blades with shorter handles work well for digging coarse gravel or coal.

Other Tips:

- Dress appropriately for the weather.
 - Keep cool in the summer - wear sunscreen
 - Dress in layers in cooler temperatures so you don't overheat
- Stay hydrated
 - Always keep a bottle of water close by - especially when it's hot out - to prevent fluid loss and replenish electrolytes in the body
 - You can even get dehydrated in colder weather!
- Don't rush the job. Trying to get the job done in a hurry is when accidents happen.
- Note on back belts: A NIOSH study proved that back belts do not prevent injuries. Therefore, you should always practice good shoveling techniques if you want to work safe and in comfort!