

BE SAFE WHILE SHOVELING SNOW

Whenever Kentucky is blanketed by snow, many of us will spend some time digging out.

Before you grab your snow shovel or start your snow blower, take a moment to think about your heart.

Clearing snow is risk factor for heart attacks. The combination of colder temperatures, which can restrict blood flow and increase blood pressure, and an uptick in physical exertion, puts a strain on the heart and can increase the risk of a heart attack.

Tips to minimize your risk

To help keep you safe and minimize risk, we recommend the following precautions:

- Individuals over the age of 55, or those who are relatively inactive, should be especially careful.
- If you have heart trouble, do not shovel without a doctor's permission.
- Do not shovel after eating or while smoking.
- Pace yourself. Be sure to stretch out and warm up just like you would before any exercise.

- Push the snow as you shovel and do not pick up too much at once. Lift with your legs bent, not your back.
- Do not work to the point of exhaustion. If you run out of breath, head inside and take a break.
- Cover your face and mouth with a scarf. Inhaling cold air can constrict your arteries and increase your blood pressure, which can increase your risk of a heart attack.

Warning signs of a heart attack

Often people affected aren't sure what's wrong and wait too long before getting help. If you experience any of the warning signs below, please contact emergency medical services immediately.

- Chest discomfort. Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body. Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.

- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort.
- Like men, women's most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort. But women are somewhat more likely than men to experience some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting, and back or jaw pain.