

## Preventing Winter Injuries

The warm sunny weather has moved out to give way for cold and chilly days. With the arrival of cold weather we also see an increase in snow and ice, which can lead to many unwanted injuries. This can be anything from a slip and fall to throwing out your back while shoveling. Follow these tips to prevent yourself from enduring a winter injury:

### **Walking Safely on ice and snow:**

When there is snow or ice on the ground it is easy to lose your traction. This can easily lead to a slip or fall. Whether it is “Black Ice” on the streets or unshoveled snow outside your front door, we need to take precautions when walking outside during the winter months.

- ◇ Extend your arms out to your sides to maintain balance. Beware if you are carrying a heavy backpack or other load, your sense of balance will be off.
- ◇ Keep your hands out of your pockets. This will allow you to use your hands if you start to fall.
- ◇ Watch where you are stepping and go slow.
- ◇ If a walkway is icy, you may be able to use the grass instead.
- ◇ When walking on steps, always use the handrails.
- ◇ Use extra care when getting in and out of you car; parking lots are particularly difficult to maintain between parked vehicles.
- ◇ Walk like a Penguin. Point your feet out slightly like penguin. Spreading your feet out slightly while walking on ice increases your center of gravity.
- ◇ Bend your knees slightly and take slower, shorter steps.
- ◇ If walking around motorists, wear appropriate clothing, which will allow others to see you.

### **If you are to fall:**

- ◇ Try to avoid landing on your knees, wrists, or spine. Try to fall on a fleshy part of your body, such as your side.
- ◇ Try to relax your muscles if you fall. Being relaxed will help prevent injuries.
- ◇ If you fall backward, make an effort to tuck your chin to help prevent your head from hitting the ground.

### **Snow-shoveling Tips:**

- ◇ Be aware of your current heart and health conditions. The sudden demand of shoveling puts a lot of demand on ones heart.
- ◇ Stretch and warm muscles up before you begin shoveling.
- ◇ A smaller will require you to lift less snow, putting less strain on your body.
- ◇ Drink plenty of water to help prevent dehydration.
- ◇ Wearing several layers will help you stay warm.
- ◇ Begin shoveling slow to allow your muscles to loosen up.
- ◇ Bend from your knees, not your back, and avoid twisting your body. Reposition your feet if needed.
- ◇ Most importantly, listen to your body. Stop if you feel any sort of pain.