

Handy Injury Prevention Tips: Three Ways to Keep Hands Safe During Winter

As winter weather fast approaches, so does the risk of a hand injury. Some of the common problems we see this time of year are slip and fall injuries, snow removal accidents or trauma from cold exposure. While these injuries can range from mild to severe, they can have a devastating impact on your function.

Here are some tips to help keep your hands safe this winter.

Avoid Slipping and Falling on Ice and Snow

- Beware of black ice – especially after a light dusting of snow
- Salt whenever possible – salt steps, pathways and any other high trafficked areas
- Wear proper footwear – wear snow boots with a good tread
- Prepare ahead of time – rushing can increase the risk of injury
- Walk carefully – shuffle across the ground to minimize a fall
- Watch your balance – if you have poor balance stay indoors during icy/snowy weather

Safe Snow Removal Suggestions

- Never reach your hand in to clear the auger (spinning device that clears the snow) even if the machine is off.
- Read the safety manual and be of a clear mind - never drink alcohol while operating machinery
- Adults only - never have a child operate a snow blower
- Be careful shoveling snow –avoid slips and falls, wear proper gloves, take breaks and use an ergonomic shovel
- Avoid throwing snow over your shoulder - A single shovel of snow can weigh more than 20lbs!

Beware of Frostbite

- Wear proper gloves – insulated, waterproof gloves or mittens are best
- Observe fingertips for signs of redness or increased pain
- Monitor time spent outside – the longer you spend outdoors, the greater the risk. Stay inside when the temperature drops.
- Use hand warmers in your gloves or mittens – available at retail stores and pharmacies
- Watch for vulnerable people – children and older adults are at a greater risk of frostbite

These tips will help keep your hands safe this winter. If a hand or wrist injury occurs and you require rehabilitation services, Penn Therapy & Fitness can help. Call 1-877-969-7342 to schedule an appointment with a hand therapist at a convenient location in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Chelsea Barker, OT, CHT
Occupational Therapist/Certified Hand Therapist