



# Harbor Physical Therapy Newsletter

Winter 2021/2022

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## Can my joints predict the weather?

A common question amongst people with joint pain is- “does the weather actually play a role in my joint pain?”. The answer to this is yes (to an extent). While it may not be the sole reason for your joint pain, changes in the weather can have certain effects on your musculoskeletal system.

Take colder temperatures for example, a decrease in temperature can cause our muscular tissue to tighten up which in turn can restrict joint movement, causing an increased sense of stiffness in the joints. Decreased temperatures can also cause the fluid in your joints to thicken slightly, which can decrease its ability to move around the joints as freely as it would in warmer weather, causing that sense of stiffness.

Another element of weather that has a role in joint pain is atmospheric pressure. Before a shift in the weather (rain or snow), the pressure of the air experiences a significant drop. A drop in atmospheric pressure allows the pressure within the body to expand. This internal rise in pressure can cause subsequent increased pressure in the joints causing increased aches and pains.

So when a friend predicts snow this winter because their knees are aching, you may want to make sure you have your snow brush and snow boots handy.

*Written by Taylor Ryan, PT, DPT*

## How To Shovel Safely This Winter

Shoveling snow is a common cause of both back and shoulder injuries in the winter months. This is due to both the repetitive nature of the activity and its requirement to lift varying loads. Listed below are a number of tips on how to shovel both safely and efficiently this winter.

1. Lift smaller loads of snow at a time, or if the snow is wet and heavy, push rather than lift.
2. Use a shovel that allows you to stand relatively upright while shoveling.
3. Turn rather than twist when you go to throw a shovel full of snow.
4. Switch arm positions every so often to allow decreased shoulder strain.
5. Take frequent breaks to relax the arms and stand up straight and stretch your back (a backward bending stretch will help relieve your muscles from the increased forward bending while shoveling)

For more information on how to utilize these tips and more, please visit: <https://www.choosept.com/health-tips/6-tips-shovel-snow-safely>

## Winter Facts

- A snowflake’s design/ shape is based on the air temperature
- The most common injuries to occur in the winter are concussions, back injuries, ankle sprains, and broken bones
- Both sunburn and dehydration can occur just as frequently in winter as they do in the summer
- You burn a similar amount of calories when you shovel a decent amount of snow as you do if you go skiing or snowboarding for leisure

## COVID-19 Vaccine Quick Facts

- Your booster shot does NOT need to be of the same vaccine as your first two doses.
- You can receive your first/second dose or booster dose the same day as your flu shot or other immunizations.
- Children ages 5-11 are now recommended to get the Pfizer vaccine.

Source: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)



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