



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 18, 2019

For more information, contact:

Ashley Gramann
HSHS Southern Illinois Division, Communications Manager
(618) 651-2588
ashley.gramann@hshs.org

HSHS Southern Illinois Hospitals Stress Snow Shoveling Safety

(BREESE, GREENVILLE, HIGHLAND, IL) – Winter is here and snow has already covered many regions of the United States. With the approaching snow event expected for the southcentral Illinois area, HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital Breese, HSHS Holy Family Hospital in Greenville and HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital Highland recommend a few safety tips before you shovel snow to clear your sidewalks and driveways.

According to the National Safety Council, snow shoveling is responsible for thousands of injuries and as many as 100 deaths each year nationwide. Shoveling snow can be a strenuous activity, even for those who are physically fit. At colder temperatures, heart rate and blood pressure can increase, as well as the risk of exhaustion, dehydration, back injuries, and even heart attacks.

Keeping your driveway and walkway clear of snow and ice is, in most cases, a necessity and will help prevent falls this winter. Follow these snow-shoveling tips to help keep you safe this winter.

- **Know if you shouldn't shovel.** Certain people should avoid shoveling snow. If you have a history of heart problems, you should avoid this activity.
- **Dress appropriately.** Wear light clothing in layers to provide both ventilation and insulation. To keep warm, wear a hat, gloves, and thick socks. Avoid falls by wearing shoes or boots with slip-resistant soles.
- **Warm up first.** Before you begin shoveling the snow, warm up your muscles for approximately ten minutes by doing stretches or other light exercises.

-MORE-

- **Use proper equipment.** Use a shovel that is comfortable for your height and strength. Do not use a shovel that is too heavy or too long for you. Space your hands on the tool grip to increase your leverage.
- **Lift snow correctly.** Try to push the snow instead of lifting it. If you must lift, do it properly. Squat with your legs apart, knees bent, and back straight. Lift with your legs. Avoid bending at the waist. Scoop small amounts of snow into the shovel and walk to where you want to dump it. Holding a shovelful of snow with your arms outstretched puts too much weight on your spine. Never remove deep snow all at once. Do it in pieces.
- **Avoid overexerting yourself.** Be very careful not to overexert yourself as you work. Pace yourself and take breaks often. It's a good idea to go indoors to warm up. Taking five to ten minutes to relax gives your body time to rest. Pay attention to the signals your body is sending. If you feel pain or pressure in your chest, call your doctor right away.
- **Choose chemical products carefully.** Putting a layer of rock salt (sodium chloride) on icy areas is an effective way to melt the ice. However, rock salt can cause damage to concrete and metal surfaces and is also harmful to plants. Magnesium chloride is less corrosive than other chemical products and works well for melting ice. Before using any ice melting products read the labels carefully.

In addition, it is always best to check with your doctor to make sure that it is alright for you to shovel snow. If you have a medical condition or are not used to strenuous exercise, you should not remove the snow yourself. It is much safer to have someone else remove it for you. If you are shoveling snow or using a snow blower and experience chest pain, stop immediately and call 9-1-1.

For more information about snow shoveling safety, please visit <https://www.nsc.org/home-safety/tools-resources/seasonal-safety/winter/snow-shoveling>.

HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital Breese, HSHS Holy Family Hospital in Greenville and HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital Highland are part of the Southern Illinois Division of Hospital Sisters Health System, which also include HSHS St. Elizabeth's Hospital in O'Fallon and HSHS St. Anthony's Memorial Hospital in Effingham.

###

About Hospital Sisters Health System

Hospital Sisters Health System's (HSHS) mission is to reveal and embody Christ's healing love for all people through our high quality, Franciscan health care ministry. HSHS provides state-of-the-art health care to our patients and is dedicated to serving all people, especially the most vulnerable, at each of our 15 Local Systems and physician practices in Illinois (Breese, Decatur, Effingham, Greenville, Highland, Litchfield, O'Fallon, Shelbyville, and Springfield) and Wisconsin (Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire, Oconto Falls, Sheboygan, and two in Green Bay). HSHS is sponsored by Hospital Sisters Ministries, and Hospital Sisters of St. Francis is the founding institute. For more information about HSHS, visit www.hshs.org. For more information about Hospital Sisters of St. Francis, visit www.hospitalsisters.org.