



The Snow Shoveler's Herbal Guide

Northeast School of Botanical Medicine

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February 2, 2021

This morning you may have woken up and looked outside to enjoy the view of a world now concealed under a mound of snow.

After a few moments of taking this in, your next thought may have been, 'this is going to be one heck of a shoveling job.'

Time to bundle up and (grudgingly) start the process.

Shoveling snow puts a lot of strain on the body. This includes exertion on the back, joints, and muscles, especially with each shovelful needing to be piled ever higher.

If you have not been active for a while, start slowly. Let your body begin to accommodate this vigorous exercise. Avoid overstraining your muscles and joints.

Instead of shoveling large amounts at once (especially if it is heavy snow), shovel it in layers. There is also an increased risk of a heart attack, especially if one is shoveling after a period of inactivity. Go easy and check in with your body.

Here are few herbal tips on how to treat your body after performing this inevitable winter's task.

Internal Applications

Snow Shoveler's Lower Back Tincture

- **Lousewort** (*Pedicularis* species) 2 pt
- ***Black cohosh** (*Actaea racemosa*) 2 pt
- **Skullcap** (*Scutellaria lateriflora* or other species) 1 pt
- **Jamaican dogwood** (*Piscidia piscupula*) 1 pt
- Dosage-1-2 dropperfuls every 2-3 hours for the first day. 1-2 dropperfuls every 4 hours the following day or for as long the pain persists.

*Avoid Black cohosh if pregnant or if using estrogen blockers (i.e., Tamoxifen)

Snow Shoveler's Achy Joint Tincture

- **Willow bark** (*Salix* species) 3 pt
- **Black birch bark** (*Betula lenta*) 2 pt
- **Feverfew** (*Tanacetum parthenium*) 2 pt
- **Devil's claw** (*Harpagophytum procumbens*) 2 pt
- **Kava kava** (*Piper methysticum*) 1 pt
- Dosage-1-2 dropperfuls every 3 hours for the first day. 1-2 dropperfuls every 4 hours the following day or for as long the pain persists.

Snow Shoveler's Muscle Pain Tea

- **Chamomile** (*Matricaria chamomilla*) 3 pt

- Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) 1 pt
- Willow bark (*Salix* species) 1 pt
- Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza* species) 1pt
- Directions and dosage-prepare approximately 1.25 oz of the tea blend to 1 quart of water. Simmer the Ginger, Willow, and Licorice for 15 minutes. Turn off the heat and add the Chamomile. Cover and let steep for 10 more minutes. Drink 1-3 (6-8 oz) cups a day.

External Applications

Show Snoveler's Muscle Rub

This could be prepared as liniment, tincture, or oil.

- Arnica flowers (*Arnica* species) 3 pt
- St. Johnswort (*Hypericum perforatum*) 3 pt
- Prickly ash (*Zanthoxylum* species) 1 pt
- Black birch essential oil (*Betula lenta*) 5 drops per oz.
- Directions-rub or massage into sore muscles. Avoid getting it into the eyes.

Hot Water Bottle

Hot water bottles are especially helpful for lower back pain

Directions-Full the hot water bottle to nearly full and place it on the lower back or wherever there is muscle or joint pain.

Do not fill it all the way, as it has to be squishy enough to follow the contours of your body. Also, make sure it is not too hot, to avoid getting burned.

Herbal Compress (with a hot water bottle)

For painful muscles and joints, including the back.

In a pot, make a strong tea of either Ginger *or* Chamomile. Use approximately 1.50 oz of herb per quart of water. Put a soft cloth into the pot to soak up the tea water.

Wring out the cloth so that it is damp but not dripping. Wearing heavy rubber gloves makes this much easier. Place it on the painful area. Change and warm it up after it cools down. If you put a hot water bottle on top of the compress, it will stay warmer for much longer so that it does not have to be changed as often. Let it sit for at least 10 minutes. This can be done a few times a day.

Hot Baths

This is a great way to submerge your body and relax in the hot water. Add 2 cups of Epsom salts to make it more soothing.