



Shovel design can help to reduce forces on the lower back and hands

Shovelling is hard work. It requires a lot of bending, twisting, and lifting. Your back and hands get tired and that fatigue could result in injury. Shovelling in awkward spaces or poor weather conditions, which is often the case, can further increase the risk of injury.

One shovel does not fit all jobs or all people:

- The handle might be too short or too long – a shorter handle gives greater stability but means more stooping. A longer handle requires less stooping but makes the shovel less efficient. There is a trade-off between your posture and load stability.
- The blade might be the wrong shape for the material being shovelled – a shovel used for moving concrete should be different from a shovel used for digging soil. Using the wrong shovel can put extra stress on your hands and arms.

A shovel designed in Australia, and available here, has features that have been shown to reduce effort by as much as 30 percent. The shovel is:

- Made from strong, light-weight steel
- Angled through the shaft to reduce the bending required
- Equipped with a D-shaped handle to improve gripping and stability

Tips for shovelling safely

Use good body mechanics when shovelling:

- Keep your legs apart for stability.
- Bend your knees.
- Turn your body as a unit; don't twist.
- Push rather than lift the shovelled load.
- Take breaks to stretch.
- Let machines do the heavy work.

Choose the right shovel for the job:

- Select the longest handle possible to reduce stooping.
- Choose the lightest shovel possible.
- Consider a "D" handle.
- Consider an angled shaft.
- Select the blade that will provide load stability.
- Select a blade with a slippery surface, as long as it is consistent with the contents of the load.

Shovel safely. Reduce the risks associated with back injuries.

