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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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PROTECT YOUR HANDS AND ARMS FROM WINTER WEATHER INJURIES

LUTHERVILLE, Md. (Feb. 11, 2010) -- In addition to Jack Frost nipping at your nose, you also have to protect yourself from hand and arm injuries when dealing with snow and ice. **Dr. Christopher Forthman**, an orthopaedic surgeon with **Greater Chesapeake Hand Specialists, P.A.** in Lutherville, explains common types of injuries, prevention techniques and treatment options.

Slip Sliding Away

- Unfortunately, there is no simple way to avoid falling on snow and ice, the best you can do is to watch out for ice, wear appropriate footwear, and avoid steps and other elevations such as a roof.
- When we fall, we tend to **land on our outstretched hands** so that we avoid injury to our heads. The result is a quite a large amount of trauma to the upper extremity this time of year.
- Fortunately, many injuries are **skin bruises and joint sprains**. If you can move the injured area, there is no major deformity and the pain is relatively mild, then it is usually safe to treat the injury yourself. **Elevate the area and apply a cold compress.**
- **Severe pain, swelling or deformity often indicate that a joint has been dislocated or a bone broken.** Most breaks involve fracturing the radius bone at the wrist. **See a doctor immediately** because often the bone must be realigned and sometimes surgery is necessary.
- **Fractures and dislocations of the elbow can also occur** when you fall onto your outstretched hand. Typically, the elbow hyperextends and the hinge joint breaks. Likewise, the ball and socket up in your shoulder may break if you fall directly onto the arm. **See a physician ASAP!**

Clean Up Cautiously

- Shoveling, scraping and other strenuous clean-up type activities after the snowstorm may result in **heart attacks** when people are more active than usual.
- They also can cause **soft tissue injuries** such as tears in the rotator cuff, tendonitis at the elbow ("tennis" elbow) or cartilage tears in the wrist.
- Many of these soft tissue problems will resolve with **rest, cold-compresses and anti-inflammatories like ibuprofen.**

(more)

To prevent these injuries, consider the following:

- **Shoveling**

- If you are healthy, shoveling can be good exercise, but it is a full body activity that requires coordinated motion of the legs, torso and arms. The key is putting your body into the maneuver.
- Let your weight help you get under the snow and let your torso help toss it away.
- **Don't lift the snow over chest height** because it could tear the rotator cuff, the layer of muscles that moves the shoulder.

- **Scraping**

- Purchase a window scraper with a good size handle or a handle that allows a two handed grip.
- Put your body into chiseling the ice...don't make your arms do all the work.
- Take regular breaks during activity
- Consider wearing an elbow or wrist brace if necessary.

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- **Safe Snowblowing**

- **Keep your hands away from the moving parts even if the machine is turned off!**
- Often energy is stored in the blades and they may recoil if you reach in to unclog the assembly. **Always use a stick or other utensil for this process.**

Warm Up the Muscles & Dress Warmly for Snowball Play

- Warm up and stretch before going outside, especially if you have a snowball fight planned with your kids.
- Dress in layers and watch out for signs of frostbite, even when wearing gloves.
- Mild frostbite causes a **yellow appearance** to the skin along with a feeling of **burning or tingling**.
- Sometimes the burning gives way to complete **numbness or no pain at all**. Don't let the numbness fool you. **Get inside and warm the affected areas**.
- **If you develop redness and swelling, go to the emergency room.** Wound care may be necessary in the hospital and particularly deep injuries may require amputations.

Founded in 1987 and based in Lutherville, Md., Greater Chesapeake Hand Specialists, P.A. focuses on providing successful outcomes for the entire spectrum of problems associated with the hand, wrist, elbow and shoulder. The practice group, which consists of nine full-time physicians, maintains seven satellite locations throughout Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Howard and Talbot counties, as well as Baltimore City. For more information visit www.chesapeakehand.com.