

# Summer Work & Injury Prevention

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## Yard Work

With the summer weather inevitably comes the summer yard work. Gardening, raking, clipping and mowing, it all has to get done, right? Injuries while doing yard work are probably more common than you think. Here are a few tips to help you stay healthy.

- \* Before doing anything — even any pre-garden stretches — take a walk around your yard a few times to loosen up. Or, take a brief bike ride around the block to help you limber up.
- \* Be cautious about the amount of strain placed on your lower back. Let your arms and legs do the work when pulling a rake or pushing a hoe or shovel. When weeding or

- planting, sit on the ground or kneel on a foam pad.
- \* Do easier tasks first. As you progress, periodically switch to other jobs to avoid overusing one muscle group. You should also alternate difficult tasks with less taxing ones.
- \* Instead of bending at the waist to pick up a bag of mulch, pull it up on your thigh close to your body and then stand up. Your thighs can take more strain than your back.
- \* Assume a scissors stance while raking by placing your right foot forward and left foot back, says the American Chiropractic Association. After a few minutes, re-

- verse this position, putting your left foot forward and your right foot back. Periodically reverse the position of your hands on the rake.
- \* Pace yourself. Work for 15 to 30 minutes and take a stretching break. If you tend to lose track of time while gardening, try taking your kitchen timer with you to remind you to take a break.
- \* Keep hydrated. Water should be consumed every 30 minutes, and on warm days, every 15 minutes.
- \* Don't try to do everything all in one day. Break long sessions into 2 or 3 hour time periods and allow yourself several days for larger projects.

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## Painting



- The house need a few touchups? Don't forget proper posture when working with your paint brush!
- \* To help prevent muscle strain, don't spend hours reaching over your head with your brush. Instead, get a secure ladder and position yourself at eye-level to the

- area you are working.
- \* When working on low areas, squat or kneel instead of bending at the waist. Use a foam pad under your knees and stand up to take a stretch break periodically.
- \* Painting is a repetitive motion and can put a great

- deal of strain on your arms, forearms and wrists. Take frequent stretch breaks and apply ice if any pain occurs.
- \* Like with any major household project, don't try to do it all in a single day. Your body will thank you for it.

## Renovating or Moving This Summer?

Most of us don't renovate or move to another house very often, so we tend to forget about posture and injury prevention when we do. Here are a few tips to help keep you safe.

\* Always test how heavy a box is before moving it by lifting one corner. If it seems too heavy for one person, it probably is. Get help lifting heavy boxes from friends or by renting a dolly from your local moving company.

\* When lifting, bend your knees, not

your back! Also, make sure you wear flat shoes with proper arch support, as heels will only increase the pressure placed on your back.

\* It may go without saying, but make sure you know how to properly use any new tools you've purchased for your renovation project. Wear any safety equipment recommended by the manufacturer, and switch activities every so often to help prevent repetitive strain injuries.

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## Don't forget proper posture when doing housework!

\* Like with other types of physical work, remember to warm up before starting the activity.

\* Make sure mops, brooms and vacuum cleaners have sufficiently long handles so you are not hunched over while cleaning.

\* Stand straight and use your legs to support your weight while cleaning.

\* When moving to the side, step in that direction rather than twisting

your body to help prevent back injury.

\* If hanging laundry on a clothes line, place the basket on a chair so that you don't need to bend constantly to pick up the clothing.

\* Grocery shopping? Don't carry all your bags on one side. Evenly distribute the weight and carry bags in both hands.

### Did you know?

Lifting a 20 kg weight with your back bent and your knees straight increases the pressure at L3 (the middle of your lumbar spine) by 169%. Lifting the same object with proper posture (knees bent and back straight) increases pressure by only 73%.

source: David J. Magee, *Orthopedic Physical Assessment*

## Injured? We Can Help!

Even the most safe and properly prepared person can injure themselves while doing physical labor. If this should happen to you, we can help!

Some of the more common injuries that will occur with summer housework include muscle strains, joint sprains, muscle soreness, and muscle cramping. With all of these types of injuries, it is important to rest

and not just 'work through the pain'. If swelling is present, apply ice for short periods of time to help decrease both pain levels and the amount of swelling.

Your treatment plan with us may involve one or more of the following therapies:

- ⇒ Chiropractic Care
- ⇒ Massage Therapy

- ⇒ Acupuncture
- ⇒ Active Release Technique® (ART)

Not sure which is right for you? Different people respond to treatments in different ways. Talk to a member of our health care team to best determine which methods are right for you!