

TAKE CARE *of* YOUR BACK!

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t's time to get back outside and clean up

from the winter's mess!

Clearing down branches, raking leftover leaves, and preparing the garden are all activities that can put a strain on your back and leave you with strains to your neck, shoulders, back and legs. But don't despair, you can cultivate a habit of wellness by planting the seeds of prevention and applying exercise, planning and stretching in healthy amounts to avoid these common aches and pains that come with spring work!

- Warm up before starting to garden by gently stretching your muscles.
- Use tools with long handles; this will help decrease the amount of bending you do.
- Instead of standing in one place and reaching for the leaves while raking, keep your feet moving and the rake close to your body.
- Don't bend over to weed or plant in your garden. Get onto hands and knees or sit on a low stool. Don't overextend your arms, and keep repositioning your body to be close to what you are doing.
- When shoveling, avoid lifting and twisting at the same time. Use your legs to turn your body and keep the shovel close to you.

- Avoid heavy lifting and carrying. Ask a friend to help you lift heavier objects.
- Use a wheelbarrow to move objects if possible. Avoid the temptation to overload the wheelbarrow.
- Lift with your legs! When picking up heavier items, separate your feet, squat down, tighten your tummy, and stand by straightening your legs. Don't bend forward and lift with your back.
- Avoid repetitive garden work. Change positions every 20-30 minutes. Staying in one position too long can fatigue the muscles and cause

excessive strain to your body.

- Stay hydrated. Dehydration can increase the chance of injury to the tissues and slow down recovery if you do overextend yourself.
- Remember that yard work is exercise, so give yourself plenty of rest breaks to avoid muscle fatigue. When your body is tired, you're more apt to injure yourself.

If you have over done it, call your primary care physician or Elliot Rehabilitation Services at 663-4125. 