



## BACK FACTS: Gardening

Every spring and fall, many individuals take part in raking, lifting, digging, kneeling and planting activities that lead to aches and pains. Improper gardening techniques can cause repetitive strain injuries, lead to degenerative joint and disc problems, cause sprain and strain injuries to muscles throughout the body and wear and tear to joints and muscles. To help you enjoy your gardening season, keep these tips in mind.



**Stretch out before you head out.** Take the time to prepare your body for activity. Always warm-up and cool down your muscles. Add a short walk and you'll have topped off your routine with overall conditioning.

**Use good lifting technique.** Keep the load close to your body with your back straight. Bend your knees while picking up and putting down the load. Avoid twisting. Ask someone for help with heavy, awkward loads.



### Use the right moves

- Alternate your tasks. Take turns between heavy chores such as digging and less physically demanding tasks such as planting.
- Stand with one leg forward and one leg back when you rake. Raking can put significant strain on your back and arms. So take extra care with this activity.
- Change hands often: Changing hands frequently when you rake, hoe or dig prevents muscle strain on one side of the body.
- Kneel to plant and weed. Constant bending can put strain on your back, neck and leg muscles and joints. Use kneepads or a kneeling mat to minimize the amount of bending required, and to make kneeling more comfortable.
- Change positions frequently. Make a point of changing position every 10 to 15 minutes. Move from kneeling to standing, from digging to planting.

**Use proper tools.** Make sure that tools are a comfortable weight and size for you. There are many ergonomically designed tools which are lightweight with long, padded handles and spring-action mechanisms that can reduce strain and effort.

**Take a break!** Get-up, move around, alternate tasks, repeat your stretch routine or sit back, relax and have a cool drink. Try not to overexert yourself; and take three brief breaks at least once every hour. The work can also be spread over several days! Give yourself a breather. Your back will thank you!

### **Canada's chiropractors – here to help**

If you have back or muscle pain that lasts more than four to five days without improvement, consider visiting a chiropractor. Chiropractors play an important role in providing preventative education and early detection of spinal problems, as well as expert care for back, muscle and joint pain and injury.

**Fact:** 80 per cent of Canadians will suffer from back pain in their lifetime. If required, a chiropractor can treat your pain through a variety of methods. These can include: spinal and joint adjustment, modalities such as ultrasound or TENS, soft tissue therapy and therapeutic exercises.

For more information, or to locate a chiropractor near you, please visit the Canadian Chiropractic Association website [www.ccachiro.org](http://www.ccachiro.org)

### **Plant and rake without the ache!**



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