



The Great Outdoors

Spring season brings more chances to get outdoors and ramp up physical activity. After the winter chill, many people jump at the opportunity to spend time outside planting bulbs, mowing the lawn and pulling weeds.

Gardening can provide a great workout, but with all the bending, twisting, reaching and pulling, the body may not be ready for exercise of the garden variety. And if the body is not prepared for the sudden increase in activity, one can develop strains and sprains that involve soft tissues, muscles, tendons and ligaments.

"A warm-up and cool-down period is as important in gardening as it is for any other physical activity," says Scott Bautch, DC, DACBOH, of the American Chiropractic Association's (ACA) Council on Occupational Health. "It is important to stretch your muscles before reaching for your gardening tools. The back, upper legs, shoulders, and wrists are all major muscle groups affected when using your green thumb. Performing simple stretches during these periods will help alleviate injuries, pain and stiffness."

To make gardening as enjoyable as possible and to reduce the risk of developing pain or discomfort from gardening or outdoor equipment misuse, ACA advises you to follow these tips:

- Stand up and prop your heel on a back door step or stool with your knee slightly bent. Bend forward until you feel a slight pull at the back of the thigh, called the hamstring. You may need to stabilize yourself by holding onto a garage door handle or sturdy tree branch. Hold the position for 20 seconds, then relax. Do it once more, then repeat with the other leg.
- Stand up, balance yourself, and grab the front of your ankle from behind. Pull your heel toward your buttocks and hold the position for 15 seconds. Do this again and repeat with the other leg.
- While standing, weave your fingers together above your head with the palms up. Lean to one side for 10 seconds, then to the other. Repeat this stretch three times.
- When using outdoor equipment, regardless of what piece of equipment you are using, make sure it has a strap -- and that you use it. Place the strap over your head on the shoulder on the opposite side of your body from the device. This will help normalize your center of gravity.
- Be sure to switch the side on which you are operating the equipment as often as possible, and to balance the muscles being used, alternate your stance and motion frequently.
- Take frequent breaks from the activity of the day. Muscle fatigue may be felt when using gardening and yard equipment for an extended period of time.

Now, are you ready for the Great Outdoors?

Give us a call today, we can help!

770-461-8781