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## GO FORTH AND GARDEN!



Spring is just around the corner! It's almost time to get out and enjoy the warm weather. For many people, that means trading in their treadmills for exercise of the garden variety. Bending, reaching, and digging in the garden can provide a great workout, but if you're not careful you can get hurt! A warm-up and cool-down period is just as important for gardening or doing yard work as it is for any athletic activity. Stretching is essential to help prevent injuries, pain, and stiffness.

### Stress-Free Stretches

Before stretching for any activity, keep a few tips in mind. Breathe in and out slowly throughout stretching exercises; stretch gently and smoothly, do not bounce or jerk your body in any way; and stretch as far as you can comfortably. You should not feel pain. Here are a few easy stretches designed to help you with your gardening workout:

☀ Stand up and prop your heel on a back door step or stool with your knee straight. Bend forward until you feel a slight pull in the muscle 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 the stretch once more, then repeat with the other heel.

☀ Stand up and put your right hand against a wall or other stable surface. Bend your left knee and grab your ankle with your left hand. Pull your heel toward your buttocks to stretch the quadriceps muscles at the front of your thigh. Hold that position for 20 seconds, relax and do it again. Repeat with the other leg.

☀ Weave your fingers together above your head with your palms up. Lean to one side for 10 seconds to stretch the upper body, then reverse. Repeat two or three times. "Hug your best friend." Wrap your arms around yourself and rotate to one side, as far as you can go. Hold it for 10 seconds, then reverse. There are many more stretching techniques that can enhance all of your physical activities. Look for stretching guides in your local bookstore. Finally, be aware of your body's form while working in the yard. Kneel, don't bend. Alternate your stance and motion as often as possible to balance the muscles used.

### When you've worked too hard

If you are already feeling aches and pains from gardening, there are ways to help alleviate the pain: apply a cold pack during the first 48 hours of symptoms or a heat pack AFTER 48 hours. If pain persists, consider visiting a doctor of chiropractic. Studies show that chiropractic care is more effective than traditional medical treatment for low-back pain. Doctors of chiropractic are trained to identify the problem and manipulate your spine to encourage the body's natural healing process. More than 30 million Americans use chiropractic treatment for these kinds of problems.

### Chiropractic Works!

Talk to your doctor of chiropractic about other ways to improve your life-style. Doctors of chiropractic are trained and licensed to treat the entire neuromusculoskeletal system helping people lead healthier lives by focusing on wellness and prevention. *Thank you to the American Chiropractic Association for this information.*

### TIPS TO PREVENT PAIN

#### At the Office:

☀ Make sure your chair fits correctly. There should be 2 inches between the front edge of the seat and the back of your legs. Sit with your feet flat on the floor, with your knees at a 90-degree angle. ☀ Take periodic stretch breaks. Clench your hands in a fist and move your hands in circles ☀ Hold the telephone with your hand or use the speakerphone. Don't cradle the phone between your ear and shoulder.

#### Playing Sports:

☀ Warm up slowly before a game to increase your heart rate. ☀ When sweat beads form, your body is at the proper temperature to stretch the tendons and muscles.

#### At Home:

☀ When washing dishes, open the cabinet beneath the sink, bend one knee, and put your foot on the shelf under the sink. Lean against the counter. ☀ Never use the arm of a sofa as a pillow. ☀ When lifting a child. Squat with your back straight and use your legs and arms to lift.

#### In the Yard:

☀ When shoveling snow, avoid twisting and turning motions and bend your knees to lift. ☀ When raking leaves, use a scissors stance: right foot forward and left foot back for a few minutes; then reverse. Bend at the knees, not the waist, as you pick up leaves or grass. For mowing, use your weight to push the mower.