

## **DIG THESE SAFE GARDENING TIPS!**

Spring is on the way and many of you are chomping at the bit to get out in the yard to do some serious digging, lifting, bending, twisting and pulling. Before you do, you may want to look back on your not so active winter months and question if your body and level of enthusiasm are on the same page. Here are a few tips to help get the body to where the mind is. As a reminder, do not perform any exercise or activity if it causes you pain. If you do experience pain, please contact your physical therapist or physician.

***Warm-up:*** It is always important to get the circulation going in both the upper and lower body before doing any strenuous activity to reduce the risk of sprains and strains.

- Lay on your back with legs straight. Pull one knee to chest with your hands until you feel a gentle stretch, hold for 5 seconds, then slowly lower leg. Repeat 10 times on each leg.
- While standing place your hands on your hips, then turn your body as far as you can to the left, hold 5 seconds, then turn to the right. Repeat 10 times each direction.
- March in place lifting each leg as high as is comfortable and repeat 10 times.
- Fold hands together, turn palms away from your body, and then extend your arms in front of you until you feel a stretch, hold 5 seconds, repeat 10 times. Repeat this maneuver, but instead of reaching in front, reach overhead.

***Cultivate Proper Body Mechanics:*** Body mechanics refers to how the body moves during activity such as reaching and lifting. Observing proper body mechanics will help reduce the risk of injury.

- **Always** bend at the knees when picking up any object, heavy or light from the ground. **Never** bend over at the waist!
- Keep objects you are lifting or carrying close to your body to reduce stress on your back.
- Use a wheelbarrow for heavier items or multiple items that need to be moved from one place to another to reduce your overall workload.
- Kneel on a pad or sit on a low stool/step-stool when weeding/planting etc.

***Sow the Seeds of Good Joint Health:*** Your joints need motion to stay healthy, but sometimes too much of a good thing can cause them to become painful and/or swollen. Observing these simple tips may help reduce the risk of joint injury or flare-ups of already arthritic joints.

- Avoid prolonged positioning or sustained activity for periods greater than 30-45 minutes to reduce joint stress. Take a break and do something else for 5-10 minutes, then resume your activity.
- Use wide handled tools to reduce stress on joints of the hand and wrist.
- Use the right tool for the job. Don't try to take down that old oak tree with your really cool new Swiss Army knife.