



Prevent injuries, prepare your muscles, joints for yard work



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By Jackie Jones

After a long winter, many of us look forward to spring and are starting to plan yard projects.

With outdoor projects, accidents and injuries often happen, even in your own yard. Slips or falls to strains and sprains – frequently these spring yard-work injuries are preventable.

Many people are prone to accidents when they hurry or underestimate the demands of their yard-work jobs, especially if the winter was more sedentary. The twisting, turning, bending and reaching involved in weeding, raking and other yard chores can cause injury if your body is not prepared.

“Before you reach for your shovel, you should consider the possible consequences, such as upper or lower back strain, neck

strain and pain in the shoulders,” says Trevor Shwaluk, Safety Advisor for WORKSAFELY™.

“For spring yard work, think of all jobs that may involve bending, or shifting body positions,” Shwaluk advises. “This may include pulling weeds, raking debris or pushing heavy lawn mowers.”

Long hours weeding and planting garden beds or pushing heavy mowers will take their toll on muscles and joints. The simplest solution is to stretch before heading out and right after you’ve finished your work.

Stretching will do wonders for the body, including preparing it for the movements done while working in the yard and cooling it down once finished.

“Opt for three rounds of 20-second stretches targeting one or two muscle groups at a time, such as hamstrings, shoulders, hips and the lower back. Increase circulation and loosen hands,

wrists and legs by shaking them out leisurely before and periodically during yard work,” recommends Shwaluk.

You can further prevent yard-work injuries by following these safety tips and procedures:

- Stand as straight as possible, and keep your head up as you rake or mow
- Bend at the knees, not the waist, as you pick up tools or piles of leaves
- Be sure to switch the sides of your body, on which you operate the equipment, as often as you can
- Change your stance and motion frequently to balance the muscles being used
- When mowing, use your whole body weight to push the mower, rather than just your arms and back
- If your mower has a pull cord, bend at the knees and pull in one smooth motion;

do not twist at the waist or yank the cord

Additionally, make sure to slip on the following gear the next time you’re outside:

- Closed-toe, slip-resistant footwear when doing activities like mowing the lawn or climbing ladders, as they’re far less likely to slide and shift
- Long pants to protect you from cuts, scrapes and ricocheting debris
- Gloves during yard work, as a final protective layer

Most importantly, listen to your body. Fatigue and pains are not signs of weakness but messages from your body to lighten it up just a little.

There’s no need to strain yourself working out in the yard. Doing so will not only cause injuries, but also result in mental strain and fatigue, as well.

