



Strains and sprains a yardwork hazard



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By Jessie Weir,
WORKSAFELY® Education Programs Coordinator

As many of us prepare for the winter ahead, last minute and final yard projects live on. In the rush to get the job done, home owners may be putting extra stress on their bodies.

If we're not conscious of our movement, this can lead to accidents and injuries, or worse.

It's important to be mindful of the strain you're putting on your body when pushing to get that last task done.

For some, yard work is a form of enjoyment and recreation. But over-exertion can lead to serious pain and long-lasting injuries.

Mental strain and fatigue can occur when you're putting in long hours in the yard without taking rests, which can also affect your body.

And think of all the hazards you may encounter doing yard work: Mobile equipment, working from heights, slippery grass, heavy objects, and the list goes on.

Pulling weeds or pushing around a lawnmower can strain muscles and cause joint pain. Before you start, it's a good idea to read up on how to protect against strains and sprains.

Slips and trips can occur when you're not wearing the correct footwear or working in slippery conditions. This can lead to fractured or broken bones, cuts and scrapes and muscle and joint pain.

Shoveling, pushing or pulling heavy equipment, digging or raking are other sources of potential strains and sprains.

Most injuries are preventable. Just like work in the heavy construction industry, we must minimize risk for injury by focusing on prevention.

"Take frequent breaks, bend at the hips and knees and always stretch before heading out," recommends Trevor Shwaluk, Safety Advisor for WORKSAFELY®.

Some additional safety tips Shwaluk suggests include:

- Switching tasks often – so the same muscles are not used excessively
- Refrain from repetitive motion
- Avoid lifting heavy objects by yourself
- Use tools to help lift heavy loads – wheelbarrow or wagon
- Wear the proper footwear
- Rest when needed

Another important part of prevention is personal protective equipment – your last line of defense. Regardless of the project, it's important to wear closed-toe shoes, slip-resistant footwear and hearing and eye protection, just to name a few.

"Most individuals don't think of personal protective equipment as a necessity for yard work. However, it can be the difference between a job well done and a trip to the emergency room," Shwaluk states.

Having the appropriate personal protective equipment, combined with mindful movement is the key to getting yard projects done injury-free, this fall.

Before you push yourself to complete that last task, listen to your body and mind and take a break. The work will always be there the next day.

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5 - 1595 Brookside Blvd Winnipeg, MB R2R 1V6
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