



Orpington Chiropractic Clinic News Bulletin



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Plant and Rake Without Backache

By Jeff Cowley DC

With snowdrops blooming and daffodils well past our ankles now, I'm starting to think about what my garden will look like when the warmer months arrive. If you're like me though, and have spent a little too much time on the sofa this winter, gardening may not be the relaxing outdoor exercise it's meant to be. That first day of mowing, clipping and pruning can feel like an Iron Man competition and could, if you're not careful, result in weeks of pain. According to a BBC Gallup pole, gardening is the most common cause of low back injury in the UK.

Gardening is great exercise. An hour spent pulling weeds or turning sod in the back yard can burn up to 400 calories, which is about the same workout as jogging for an hour. But think about it. Would you enter a 10 km road race after spending a winter in front of the telly? Not if you wanted to avoid an onslaught of aches and pains. So, before you start up your mower, overload your wheelbarrow, or overdo it with your spade, here is a fitness guide to help you master your backyard marathon.

Preparation: Any serious athlete will tell you that preparation is the key to success. It might seem unnecessary to train merely to go into your garden and pull weeds, but research shows that general physical fitness is the best way to avoid most forms of low back pain. As well, keeping a reasonable level of activity throughout the year, such as taking a brisk walk every day, should be part of your training schedule.

Before you set out to clear your

backyard jungle, give your body a good warm-up. To spare yourself pain later, invest 10 to 15 minutes in stretching your legs, arms and back before you start to work.

And before you set foot in your garden, take a good look at the job that lies before you and be honest with yourself. If there are any really heavy jobs, like moving heavy or pruning high, hard to reach places, or if you have a history of back trouble, don't be a hero: get some help.

Technique: in most sports, technique is everything. Gardening is no different. Many of the activities, such as heavy lifting, forward bending and twisting, can all be done in a way to maximize your performance and minimize the risk of injury.

Heavy lifting, such as hauling stones or logs, is where most gardeners get into trouble. Before lifting anything, check the weight and determine if you need help. Avoid lifting objects over your head. Instead, stand close to a load, with your feet on either side of it, keep your back straight, bend, and then lift from your knees.

Jobs involving prolonged forward bending -- the "rice-picker" position -- are another problem area. Rather than bending at your waist for jobs like planting bulbs and pulling weeds, get down on your hands and knees. A set of kneepads like the ones carpet-layers wear can spare you a few bruises.

Twisting activities, such as shoveling or starting a lawnmower, can result in vicious sprain injuries if you're not



careful. Lightweight, long-handled spades, forks and hoes should be used with a forward and backward action. Try to use a forward and backward motion when start-

ing mowers. If possible use a mower that has a built-in drive motor, and if you're using a fly-mow, avoid swinging it from side to side.

Pace: Gardening isn't a sprint event. It's more like distance running or a rally event. Be realistic about the amount of work you can do and, if you have to, spread the jobs over a few days. Take lots of breaks and drink plenty of fluids.

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Friends & Family offer—
£13 off initial consultation
with this newsletter

Health Quiz:

Headache is the most common neurological complaint in Great Britain. Test your wits with the Orpington Chiropractic Headache Quiz.

1. Women suffer from migraine headaches three times more often than men do.

- a) true
- b) false

2. A thunderstorm or a tornado can trigger a migraine headache in some people.

- a) true
- b) false

3. Unless you experience vision or other sensory problems (aura), you probably do not have a migraine.

- a) true
- b) false

4. Hotdogs, processed meats, red wine and aged cheese can cause headaches for some people.

- a) true
- b) false

5. People who have "cluster" headaches are likely to share certain physical characteristics.

- a) true
- b) false

6. As many as 90 percent of all headaches are tension headaches.

- a) true
- b) false

7. Some people have headaches at the same time every day for months.

- a) true
- b) false

8. There is not much you can do for a migraine except lie down in a dark, quiet room until it passes.

- a) true
- b) false

9. Getting regular exercise, eating right, quitting smoking, and keeping regular sleep habits can help prevent migraines.

- a) true
- b) false

10. Tension headaches can be prevented.

- a) true

ANSWERS: 1-a, 2-a, 3-b, 4-a, 5-a, 6-a, 7-a, 8-b, 9-b, 10-a

Gardening *without* Back Pain

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First Aid: If you start to feel pain, do the sensible thing. Stop working and take a rest. Many aches are simply due to muscle spasm and may go away if you just lie down and relax. Try lying flat on your back with your feet on the ground and your knees bent. In this position you can also do pelvic tilts. Simply tighten your stomach muscles and press the curve of your back against the floor. Hold for 10 seconds and slowly relax. Try this 2 or 3 times.

If the pain still continues, treat the affected area with ice packs. If you don't have an ice pack, a bag of frozen peas or corn will do. Ice will help to reduce swelling, ease pain and speed the healing process.

If your pain persists for more than two days or you have shooting pain down your legs, see a medical doctor or chiropractor.

It's simple advice but it's amazing how many people don't think of it until it's too late and they're already suffering. With a little common sense you can keep your back in shape *and* enjoy watching your garden grow.

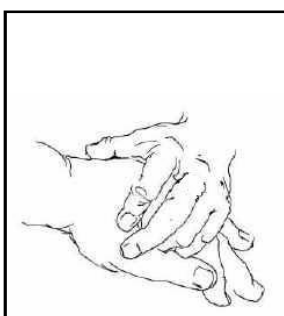
Why See a Chiropractor If It Doesn't Hurt?

This is a good question, even if many find it an awkward one to put to their chiropractor. After all, most of you consulted a chiropractor in the first place because of symptoms – and once these have been eliminated why have further appointments been recommended?

Chiropractors can do many wonderful things but they cannot reverse wear and tear, nor can they wave a magic wand and take all mechanical stress from your life! Life must continue and you must do so with your wear and tear in place and also coping with many of the hazards that caused your problems in the first place.

Maintenance care continues after your immediate ailments have been dealt with

and corrected as far as possible. This is where we try our best to minimise the chance of fur-



ther relapses or continued degeneration. Maintenance care does not guarantee that you will never have problems again but it does make them substantially less likely – especially if you also heed the advice given to you as our patient.

It is as though your body is the car and we are the mechanics. Nobody makes

spares (apart from a few joints or the like) so we tune up what you have and keep it in the best possible shape. We DON'T want you having breakdowns and having to be towed back to the garage (clinic) because it actually makes us look bad! You may tell your friends how good we are but additional "breakdowns" make our work look substandard, even though it may have been an accident, or even your fault! Plus there is always the risk that it might become so bad that there is nothing more we can do... we can't even "scrap" you!

So look after your body – and help us do the same.

***Just remember,
you can't buy a new body!***