

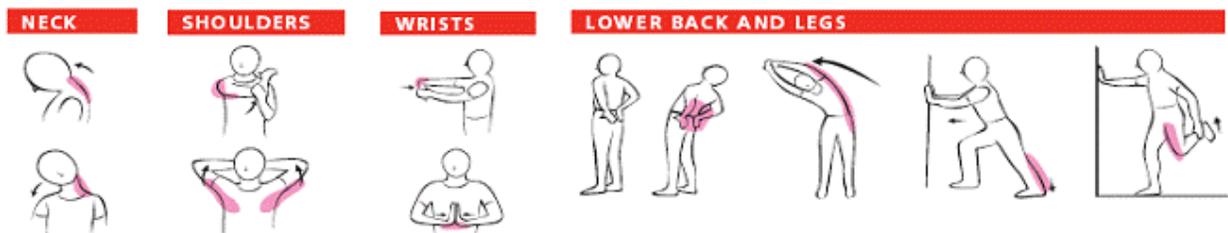
## Gardening Tips



These gardening safety tips have been prepared for you by the Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA) to help you have a healthy and active gardening season. CPA recommends gardeners take the **S.M.A.R.T. approach** (**S**tretch, **M**ove, **A**dd it up, **R**educe Strain, **T**alk to a physiotherapist) to ensure you get the most out of your gardening season:

### **STRETCH – BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER GARDENING**

Stretching – as a warm-up, as a break during repetitive movement, and as a cool-down – helps you to move easily, keeps your muscles flexible and relaxed, your joints mobile and relieves tension and strain.



#### **When stretching, remember:**

- Movements should be slow and controlled, you should feel a gentle stretch of the muscle – stretching should never be painful;
- Once you feel a stretch, hold the position for 10 – 15 seconds. Do not bounce or jerk; and repeat each stretch two or three times.

### **MOVE – TODAY FOR TOMORROW**

Get moving. Keep moving. Stay moving. Through the seasons. Through life.

Gardening is an excellent way to get your whole body in motion.

- Section off your garden to find your “easy zone” – that permits your body to work in a comfortable posture – and try to do your work within this “zone”;
- Activity outside your “easy zone” may cause sprains and strains. Avoid “out of zone” postures by:
- Moving with your work – keep your work in front of and close to your body to avoid reaching and twisting;
- Lift with your knees bent, keeping your back straight.

### **ADD IT UP – AN HOUR IS POWER**

To *gain* mobility, plan activities throughout your day that keep you moving for periods of at least 10 minutes. To *maintain* your mobility, make every movement count. Add up all you do in a day and aim for a minimum of 60 minutes of *movement* every day.

Be realistic! Your body can only perform at the level of effort and endurance it is accustomed to. For maximum benefit, physiotherapists recommend regular physical activity and stretching to maintain your physical mobility throughout the year.

- **Work within your physical strength.** Standard safe lifting loads are 64 lbs. (about 29 kg) for middle-aged men and 28 lbs. (about 13 kg) for women, but a ‘safe’ lift is less than this when the load is difficult to reach or an awkward shape;
- **Pace yourself!** Take a break, spread tasks over a period of time, and take time to recover between projects;
- **Rotate tasks.** Avoid over-use injuries by doing different activities throughout the day to reduce strain on major muscle groups and joints.

### **REDUCE STRAIN – USE TOOLS THAT WORK FOR *YOU***

Gardening tools and equipment are meant to ease work, not cause additional strain. Take measures to fit the tools to you, not you to the tools.

- **Keep your supplies within easy reach** – consider using an apron with pockets;
- **Use tools to reduce work** - a wheelbarrow to transport supplies, an extended handle to reduce the reach, and tools with good grips or ergonomic handles.

### **TALK TO A PHYSIOTHERAPIST**

Physiotherapists are healthcare professionals who help people of all ages and lifestyles gain and maintain their desired level of active living and physical mobility. With their applied knowledge and understanding of the human body in action, physiotherapists are able to help you to

increase your mobility, relieve pain, build strength and improve balance and cardiovascular function. Physiotherapists not only treat injuries, they also teach you how to prevent the onset of pain or injury that can limit your activity.