

Tips on How to Prevent Back Pain During Autumn Gardening

In the autumn, as the leaves begin to fall and plants start to die back, our minds turn to the plentiful jobs in the garden that need completing before the winter sets in.

Chiropractic care is very effective in treating common gardening injuries such as lower and upper back pain, neck pain, knee and shoulder pain. If you have any aches and pains associated with gardening this autumn then don't hesitate to make an appointment. To try and prevent this from happening, here are some easy tips.

Whether you are digging, raking up leaves, clipping back, wheeling a wheelbarrow or tidying perennials, it is important to take your time and look after your back.

Make sure that you **dress warmly** and warm up by doing some general, light activity before you tackle the heavier and more complex things in the garden. Then, when you feel a bit warmer, you can gently stretch to gain more flexibility.

Wear a support belt to protect your back. The back support will give you additional protection if your core muscles are not strong enough. Even if they are, the belt will help to protect your back further.

Make it as easy as possible for you by using **kneelers, trolleys and a wheelbarrow** instead of lifting and carrying heavy objects. When you lift, make sure you bend your knees and keep your back straight and avoid twisting.

Take regular breaks and make sure you **drink plenty of fluids** to keep yourself hydrated.

Clothes: wear warm clothes that will keep you dry but avoid wearing clothes that are tight or could constrict your movement.

Warm up: gardening is like any other exercise; you need to warm up first. Don't go straight into heavy work, consider starting with the lighter jobs and build up to the heavier ones as this will lower the chance of muscle strain.

Clever pruning: over reaching is often a cause of gardening injuries, as considerable strain is placed on your body when you over reach. Get as close as possible to the things you are pruning and avoid over stretching to reach the area you are dealing with. Invest in some long-handled secateurs to reach plants and bushes that are beyond normal reach. Use a utility belt to keep your gardening equipment close at hand.

Using the rake: keep your body in line with the rake and don't over stretch by leaning too far forward or dragging your arms too far behind. Use short, precise movements. When going to pick up the leaf litter, bend both knees and keep your back straight, using a squatting action rather than bending through your back.

Take a break: remaining in one position or repeating the same action for too long puts your muscles and joints under too much strain. Vary your activity by spending no more than 20-30 minutes on any one thing and make sure you take regular breaks. Perhaps set a timer each time to remind yourself to take a break - it can be very easy to get stuck into these activities and lose track of time!

Remember that gardening is a form of exercise for your body so it is also important to drink water and keep yourself well hydrated.

Plan ahead: a specialist garden trolley might be worth investing in to move heavy objects around. Whenever possible, break down loads into smaller sizes that are easier to manage rather than overloading yourself. If you have heavy loads to move and cannot break these down, why not ask a friend to help.

