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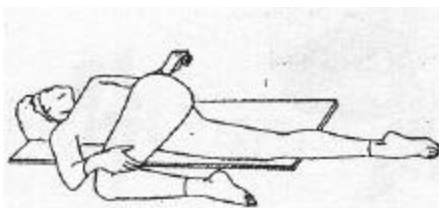
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"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"

Doing Spring Yard Tasks Can Give Pleasure or Pain. Your Choice!

Not that we have had the weather to show for it but spring is actually here. Just like any other year, droves of people are injuring their low backs while sprucing up the yard. Whether it's raking the lawn, digging in the garden, or finishing last years landscaping projects, everybody wants these jobs done and out of the way. Unfortunately, this usually means the average person, who is not overly physically active over the winter, attempts to get as much done as possible whenever the sun appears and gets them motivated. I call these people weekend warriors. They are hard working motivated, and a tad stubborn, folks who try to get as much done as possible in a single day. There is no time for taking breaks or stretching their back.

Just get at the task at hand and go until it is done. Then, at the end of the day, these people stand back and admire their accomplishments like a pioneer in the 1900's who just finished building his rustic cabin. It's at this time that they start to feel the stiffness in their low back. So, they revert back to reality and sit down on their not so 1900's lawn chair to sip on a Budweiser.



Lie on the floor with your right leg straight. Bend your left leg, pull it across your body and down toward the floor with your right hand. The knee doesn't necessarily have to touch the floor, but try. Place your left arm comfortably on the floor to your left. This will keep your shoulders flat on the floor. Turn your head to the left. Hold stretch for ten seconds, then do the same with the right leg. Do each side three times.



Sit up straight, balance on your "sit bones." Keep your spine straight. Straighten your left leg, then cross your right leg over the left (put the right foot on the floor, outside the left knee). Turn your torso to the right, "hooking" the outside of your right knee with your left elbow or hand. Put your right hand on the floor behind you for balance as you twist. Hold for ten seconds and breathe slowly. Repeat on each side three times.

But wait, the discomfort in their low back is not easing off, in fact, it is getting worse! By bedtime, they are experiencing some pretty serious discomfort. The next morning, they can hardly get out of bed. The simple things in life like putting your own socks on or being able to get off the toilet without help becomes a humiliating chore. This is when they usually walk in to our office. Likely, they have had this to some degree in the past and found that Chiropractic treatment has helped. Once examined, we usually find that their low back muscles are in spasm, the joints in the spine are stiff and likely inflamed, and sometimes the nerves are irritated enough to refer pain down into their legs and buttocks. After a series of treatments, including: icing the inflamed joints, gently stretching the tight muscles, and manipulating the stiff joints to increase their mobility, the weekend warrior's back will gradually heal. This type of conservative treatment addresses the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms. Unfortunately, this usually enables them to do it all over again next year.

I hope this all didn't sound too cynical. The main point of this article is to encourage the "**prevention**" of the above scenario. Firstly, do not tackle the heavy landscaping projects all on once. Try to spread them out over a few weekends. If you are raking up those leaves or dead grass, pull the rake towards you while keeping your back straight. Do not pull the rake to your side and repetitively twist your back. Take regular breaks, but not necessarily with a Budweiser each time or very little work will actually get done. If you are shoveling, work in front of you. If you have to throw the dirt to a different spot or into a wheelbarrow, turn your feet and pelvis to face the new location. Don't plant your feet and twist your low back repetitively. If you have to lift heavy objects like large landscaping rocks or railroad ties, lift with your legs and keep your back straight. Before, during, and after this hard work, stretch your low back as shown in the diagram. If your low back becomes stiff and remains that way for more than a day or so, visit your chiropractor to speed up the healing process.