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

Spring Yard Tasks

Every year during the spring season, droves of people injure their low back 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, suddenly tries to get as much done as possible in a single weekend.

By the Sunday afternoon, they often feel stiffness in their low back. Rather than easing off when they rest, it often becomes worse. By bedtime, they may be experiencing some pretty serious discomfort. By the next morning, they can hardly get out of bed. It is at this point that 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 often when they decide to see a chiropractor. Likely, they have had this to some degree in the past and found that chiropractic treatment has helped. Upon examination, their low back muscles are in spasm, the joints in the spine are stiff and inflamed, and sometimes the nerves are irritated enough to refer pain down into their legs and buttocks (sciatica).

After a series of chiropractic 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. However, it is much more logical to prevent the injury from occurring in the first place. If you are planning to tackle your yard maintenance tasks in the near future, read the following recommendations:

- 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.

- 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.
- If your low back becomes stiff and remains that way for more than a day, visit your chiropractor to speed up the healing process.