

# Dr. Colin Gage

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

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## **Will Getting Firewood Test Your Manlihood?**

Although the number of people burning wood to heat their homes is getting less every year, the actual collection of the wood still seems to cause an increase in the number of people entering my office with low back pain. I will use an example of a man who practically crawled into my office this month after attempting to collect some firewood.

Collecting firewood allows many a man to fulfill their primal urges of hunting and gathering. Like a caveman sharpening his spear, he sharpened his weapons (axe, chainsaw). This pre-hunt ritual occurred while the next generation of hunters, his son, watched in awe. After pleading ignorance about requiring a permit from the Ministry of Forests, he headed out looking for that perfect tree. Once found, the tree was butchered into pieces like a moose that was hunted and cut into quarters. While still under a natural adrenalin rush from the hunt, coupled with the need to demonstrate his Hercules-like strength to his son, he felt invincible. He proceeded to repetitively lift the massive pieces into his pick-up truck. The hunt was proceeding just as planned, until....

Just as he picked up the last piece, he felt a sharp pain in his lower back. It then shot from his back to his right hip and groin. While dropping to his hands and knees, the piece of wood he was holding fell and landed heavily on his big toe. Once the pain in the toe subsided, the pain from his right hip and groin began to spread into his right testicle and lower leg. Not only was his ability to hunt and gather suddenly disappearing before his eyes, but now his manlihood was also in jeopardy. Covered in sawdust and giving off a distinct odor of chainsaw oil with a hint of freshly cut pine, he crept into my office one hour later. He had sprained the joints in his lower back. The resulting inflammation then irritated the nerves that exit between each of his vertebrae and then combine to form the sciatic nerve. With chiropractic treatment and modifying his activities, he was back to normal within a week or two.

To prevent the rest of you men from having your hunting/gathering abilities decimated, as well as having your manlihood tested, I will review a few "back safety" tips when collecting firewood. First, find a tree that is accessible by your truck so that you will not have to carry the pieces over uneven ground. Second, cut the tree into shorter

pieces. They will be lighter to lift and easier to split. When lifting each piece, keep your lower back straight and lift with your legs. Third, when tossing the pieces into the truck, do not twist your back. Fourth, do not try to collect the entire winter's supply in one weekend. If you are like the average person, this is not an activity your body is used to doing. Fifth, do not use an axe that is too heavy. You will not be able to control it properly that one time when your aim is a little off. Finally, see your chiropractor a few weeks BEFORE you go out to collect firewood. This will allow the chiropractor to identify and correct any low back issues so that when you do challenge your back, it is ready for it. For free stretches that would help limber the muscles and joints of your back prior to attempting any physical activity, log onto our website: [www.merrittchiro.com](http://www.merrittchiro.com)