



Spring – Hydration, Warm-up and the Right Tools

Spring! It's a time for new life, new activities, and treasured pastimes... but it's also a time when many of us injure ourselves doing the things we love. How can you enjoy your favorite activities, while minimizing your risks for aches, pains, sprains, and strains? Here are some tips.

Most of us haven't mowed the lawn, planted bulbs, or gone for a bicycle ride during the winter months. Jumping back into these activities carries risks (see insert). Starting a lawn mower or weed whacker can stress the back and shoulders, putting you out of commission for days, weeks, or longer. As satisfying as gardening is, kneeling and pulling and digging for hours on end can stress muscles and the spine in ways it hasn't seen since last year; and you'll be very unhappy the next day if you overdo it. Furthermore, those sunny and warm days may have you excited about your new fitness routine, but too many of us will jump in headfirst and pay the price. There's a better way, and your doctor of chiropractic is here to help guide you into the wonders of Spring (and beyond).

One key to caring for your body is hydration. Not only can drinking plenty of water protect you from heat-related illness, but also there's the fact that your body is mostly water. Spinal discs are typically 70, 80, even 90% water! Drinking plenty of pure water can save you spinal problems by protecting your back. The discs of your spine space the bones, and well-hydrated discs means plenty of room for delicate nerve roots to your muscles, allowing your frame to function at its peak potential. How's that for an inexpensive way to care for your body?

Athletes commonly warm up for up to an hour before their events; and you should consider the wisdom inherent in easing into activity. If you're going to sweat and strain, consider a gentle 5-minute walk first. If you're going to bend forward a lot, try "depressurizing" your spinal discs by gently bending backwards a few times. If your activity will involve your shoulders, very gently put them through an active range of motion for a few minutes before you start pulling and straining at those weeds. Let your joints, muscles, ligaments, and tendons warm up to your tasks, and you may save yourself a lot of heartache.

Here's another tip: Use the right tool for the job. Take a moment to grab a hammer or mallet instead of using your hand or fist. Use a ladder where called for, and be sure it's secure. Correctly use safety equipment such as gloves, eye protection, and blade guards. Consider kneepads or a soft cushion if you're going to be low to the ground for any long period of time. Finally, never use a tool for a job it was never intended for. Good tools increase your leverage and effectiveness, allowing physics and inanimate objects to take the stress. You can always get a new rake, but new backs and necks and knees are hard to come by.

If you've already injured yourself, consider chiropractic care. Chiropractic is a safe and effective way to bounce back fast from a wide variety of joint, muscle, ligament, tendon, and functional (nervous system) problems. Though anti-inflammatory medications can help you "tough it out," people find that chiropractic care not only decreases pain, but also helps improve return-to-function times. Your flowers, your tennis racket, and your lawn are calling you-- so why wait any longer than you have to? And once you're back on top of your game, consider chiropractic care as a tool to help you stay healthy and limber. That's something pills can never do.

Dr. Misty Paul, DC

**Basics First Chiropractic
522 E. Market Street
Leesburg, VA 20176
703-777-2532**

www.BasicsFirstChiropractic.com