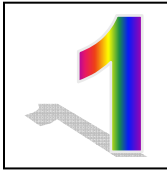


## **Preventing Spring Cleaning Injuries – Five Healthy Tips**

By: Dr. Brandon Crouch

Warmer weather is here and for most of us it could not come soon enough. Winter seemed to be a little harsher this year which has many south central Kentuckians eager to get outdoors and start spring cleaning. Whether you have plans for your garden, yard, or home this is the time of year more injuries occur around the house. Truth be told, many of these injuries could be prevented if the proper safety precautions are taken. In this article I would like to give you five healthy tips to think about to help you stay injury free during your spring cleaning.



First, take the time to warm up and stretch. Your body has over 600 muscles and many of them become shortened and weak when not used for periods of time. To warm your muscles walk or do light activities for 5-10 minutes. Then stretch your entire body including your neck, back, arms, and legs before starting your task. Stretching is probably one of the most under appreciated injury prevention tips. If done properly it will help prevent many of the common muscle injuries.



The second health tip is to be sure to use proper lifting techniques. Lifting properly sounds simple enough but is often sacrificed due to being in a hurry. To lift properly bend at the knees. While keeping your abdominal muscles tight hold the object you're lifting close to you and lift with your legs. If you can't easily lift the object straight up without strain then get help from a friend.



Third, alternate your activities every 10-15 minutes. If you need to spend time kneeling or leaning over in your flower garden then limit it to only 10-15 minutes at one time. Alternate your work with another activity that involves you standing up. This will help keep your muscles from becoming over worked or strained. For the time you are spent kneeling put one knee forward and one knee back. By doing this you can then support your upper body weight on your forward knee using a cushion or towel. You can also alternate your kneeling with sitting on a bucket. (Hint: Sitting directly on the ground often puts the most amount of strain on your low back.)



The fourth health tip involves any activity where you are standing and using a broom, rake, vacuum, garden hoe, or equivalent tool. The most common mistake while using one of these tools is made by reaching, stretching, or twisting to reach a larger working area. The problem this creates is excessive torsion and twisting on the low back. The best way to prevent injury is to stand with one foot forward and one foot back while you use short strokes and keep your work tool directly in front of you at all times. If you need to work to the left or the right rotate your entire body so that your work area is again in front of you. Additionally if you will alternate your legs and hands every few minutes, pulling from both left and right sides, you will not overwork one side of your body.



The fifth and last healthy tip is to be safe when climbing. Although this is common knowledge the majority of the accidents around the home that lead to hospital visits or death is related to falls. A common mistake is using a chair or stool (with or without wheels) to reach a high work area. Although it may take a little more time, getting a ladder or step stool is the safe way to reach high areas. After you have set your ladder on solid ground open it fully and lock it in place. Position the ladder so that you don't have to stretch or reach and never place it in front of an unlocked door. If you already have balance issues it is best to ask a friend to help with the high areas.

Like all injuries prevention is the key. After a long winter your home is probably in need of a little conditioning and so is your body. If you put these five health tips to action when performing your spring cleaning you will help reduce the chances of injuring yourself and you just might enjoy that warmer weather a little more!

#### About the Author:

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