



## Avoid Aches and Pains While Gardening

Gardening is a strenuous activity and it is very easy for people to overdo it. Common gardening tasks, such as digging, planting, weeding, mulching and raking can cause stress and strain on muscles and joints, especially for seniors or those who are normally sedentary. The shoulders, back, neck and knees are prime targets. Following these tips can help you minimize the risk of injury:

- Warm up before you begin. Get your heart rate up by taking a 10-minute walk followed by some stretches for your upper and lower back, neck, arms and legs. Roll your shoulders back in a circular motion and slowly move your head from side to side a few times to loosen up.
- Don't overdo it. Be mindful of how your body feels. If you experience an aching back or neck, then slow down and stretch or stop and switch to a different task.
- Use a garden cart or wheelbarrow to move tools and heavy planting materials.
- Don't kneel on both knees. Keep one foot on the ground to give your back more stability. If you have to kneel, use knee pads or a pillow to absorb some of the pressure.
- Change positions and take frequent breaks to avoid stiffness or cramping.
- Start with smaller projects and build gradually. Don't try to do it all at once.
- Practice proper body mechanics. Bend at your knees when you grab something or pull a weed, bend your knees and contract your abdominal muscles to avoid straining your back.
- End your gardening session with a short walk or some light stretching. Take a warm bath or shower to help prevent next-day soreness.
- If you experience pain, contact your physical therapist.

### How a Physical Therapist Can Help

As an expert in the way the body moves, a physical therapist helps restore and improve mobility and motion, in many cases providing a first-choice alternative to surgery or side-effects of long-term use of prescription medications.

To learn more about conditions physical therapists treat and to find a physical therapist in your area, visit [www.moveforwardpt.com](http://www.moveforwardpt.com). Follow us on Twitter (@moveforwardpt) and Facebook (move4wardpt).

The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) represents more than 77,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and students of physical therapy nationwide.

Find a physical therapist in your area at [www.moveforwardpt.com](http://www.moveforwardpt.com)

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