

PREVENTING INJURIES WHILE WORKING OUTSIDE

Tips for Keeping Your Back Safe

Fall is a busy time of year – getting the outside of your home ready for winter. To avoid common injuries, here are a few tips.

Raking

Raking should be viewed as exercise - which requires muscles that are infrequently used. *"Like all exercise, to prevent injury it should be done correctly,"* says Indiana Spine Group minimally invasive spine specialist John Arbuckle, M.D. To minimize soreness and injury, follow these tips:

- Stretch before you begin, and use good body mechanics while working.
- Keep your back mostly upright and avoid twisting.
- Step side to side, using your legs to move instead of just your arms. This will keep you from overreaching and twisting.
- Keep your elbows bent, and switch hands throughout the job to reduce stress on one side of the body.
- Take breaks as needed, stretching and briefly bending backward to reduce back pressure.

Ladder Use

Each year, more than half a million people are treated for injuries related to ladders. While they are very useful tools, ladders can be dangerous when not used properly. Safety is crucial.

However, misuse is rampant. So when cleaning those gutters this year, remember:

- Use the right ladder for the task.
- Inspect your ladder for loose parts or cracks, and clean any material, such as mud, ice or liquid, off the rungs.
- Ensure that the ladder is firmly placed on even ground or flooring. Engage the locks and braces before climbing.
- Never carry heavy or bulky items up a ladder. Instead, climb the ladder and pull up the material with a rope.
- Overreaching while on a ladder is probably the most common reason for falls. Always keep your torso inside the ladder's rails. Reposition the ladder often to get closer to the work.
- Don't stand or sit on the top step. It isn't designed to hold your weight.
- Don't use the top step to hold tools or materials. You could lose your balance, or items may fall on you.
- Climb up or down carefully using both hands. If you feel dizzy, hug the rungs until you feel better. Then, slowly climb down.
- Never use metal ladders around exposed electrical wiring.
- If you do fall, assess whether you are hurt and get up slowly. Call for help. If you are seriously injured, call 911.

Lifting

- Lift what you can handle without overexerting yourself. Get some help!
- Use hooks, straps and pulleys for heavy loads.
- Squat down instead of bending over, using your legs to stand up.
- Maintain strong abdominal muscles while lifting.
- Lift slowly, keeping the item close to your body in a comfortable position.
- Do not twist while lifting.

This information is provided by physical therapy services at Indiana Spine Group. For more information about physical therapy services and Indiana Spine Group, please call (317) 228-7000 or visit www.indianaspinegroup.com.



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