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Yard Work Safety

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Supervising Safety Newsletter

Don't let yard work become a pain in the neck. Whether you're an avid gardener or you dread mowing the grass, you are susceptible to an outdoor injury, including:

- Back injuries from heavy lifting
- Strained muscles from planting or raking
- Rotator cuff tendonitis from pruning hedges with heavy sheers
- Lower back pain from weeding

Here are few tips to ensure yard work does not become a health hazard.

1. Prevent overuse injury.

You may engage muscles during yard work that you don't use on a daily basis. Take a few minutes to stretch and warm up before you grab the pruning sheers or rake. As you work, try to change tasks every 30 minutes or so to avoid a repetitive-use injury.

2. Lift properly.

When lifting anything, bend from the hips and knees, not the back. If you are moving material from one place to another, use a cart or wheelbarrow to avoid straining your back.

3. Dress properly for yard work.

Wear substantial shoes, long pants, close-fitting clothes, ear protection, safety glasses, and gloves when needed. Gloves will improve your grip on tools and equipment. They will also provide protection from splinters, debris, thorns, and obnoxious weeds.

4. Stay hydrated.

When it is warm outside, it is easy to become dehydrated. Drink plenty of fluids before and during yard work. Take a break and sit in the shade if you start to feel lightheaded. Many people spend hours working in the yard without taking a break to refuel. This can lead to lightheadedness and dehydration, which should be taken seriously. No one wants to end up in a doctor's office for something that could have been easily avoided.

5. Wear sunscreen.

Don't be deceived by a cloudy day. UV rays come through the clouds the same as when it is sunny, so sunscreen is vital when you spend prolonged time outdoors. Make sure to apply SPF to the neck area. This area is usually neglected. Wearing a wide-brimmed hat can also help protect the neck and face.

6. Nix pesky bug bites.

Mosquitos thrive in damp areas, so empty anything in your yard that contains standing water such as gutters, pet water dishes, planters, buckets, pool covers, old tires, or birdbaths.

Protect yourself from mosquito-borne diseases, like West Nile Virus, by wearing light-colored clothing, long sleeves, pants, socks, and an insect repellent that contains DEET when you're working outdoors.

7. Know how to operate the equipment that you are going to use before you use it. Read the operator's manual and follow all safety instructions.

Yard work is a great form of exercise. It is something people of all ages can participate in and can even be a fun family activity. Don't let yard work injuries get in the way.

