

Late Summer Back Care Advice

Although it appeared that summer never really came with any gusto this year, many of us have been hopeful for an Indian summer. Perhaps then there might be an opportunity to enjoy doing a little more in the garden or perhaps up our activity levels in the outdoors and take advantage of some sunshine at last! Indeed I hope we can all enjoy doing a little more with some good weather on the way. Here are a few words of advice to help you look after your back and make any increases in activity as pain free and long lasting as possible.

Back problems are common; in fact spinal problems are among the most common conditions encountered by physiotherapists. More working days are lost because of back pain than any other single condition and sport does not escape this epidemic. It is estimated that 80% of the population will suffer at least one disabling episode of low back pain during their lives, and at any one time as many as 35% of people will be suffering from back pain of some sort (Frymoyer and Cats-Baril, 1991).



- Warm up before you start by gently stretching your muscles
- Gentle exercise can build strong back and stomach muscles to support your spine and maintain flexibility
- Walking and cycling are easy to incorporate into your daily lifestyle
- Swimming is particularly good for backs because it strengthens the muscles while supporting the body in the water
- Choose exercises suitable for your level and work up gradually
- Wear good footwear and appropriate clothing
- Avoid repetitive activities such as bending and twisting
- Alter your position regularly

- Take regular breaks
- Drink plenty of liquid before, during and after exercise
- Don't eat a big meal before exercising
- Avoid exercising on a stone or concrete floor
- Don't lift heavy objects, if you must lift something remember to bend your knees and keep your back straight. Use a wheelbarrow to move objects in the garden where possible and wear a belt that supports your back if necessary
- Keep flower beds narrow so you don't have to stretch over plants
- Use garden tools with long handles such as forks and trowels thus reducing your need to stretch
- Put secateurs in a holster on your belt, saving repeated bending when picking them up
- Use hoses on reels or an automated irrigation system. If using a watering can, only half fill it to reduce back strain from lifting
- Stop if an activity hurts your back
- Consult your doctor or physiotherapist if you have any back trouble or are unsure what type of exercise is appropriate for you

Remember to take things at your own pace and enjoy yourself!



Fingers crossed for an Indian summer!

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