

# Back Injuries

## Don't Strain Your Back While Gardening



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# Avoiding Back Strains While Gardening

Pulling weeds, raking or digging a whole may not seem like heavy work, but these activities can straining your back in painful ways. Frequent squatting and kneeling, often required for planting, weeding, digging and raking, involves repetitive motion as well as twisting and turning. When you also are lifting and carrying bags of mulch, leaves or fertilizer, you are giving your back plenty of reasons to be sore and possibly even seriously hurt.



## Expert Tips to Reduce Opportunity for Back Strain

- Avoid squatting and bending as much as possible
- Kneel on a soft cushion instead of bending over while weeding, planting or working close to the ground.
- Take stretch breaks every 15 to 30 minutes. Slowly stand up. Take several deep breaths and place your hands on your upper buttocks. Gently extend the back.



- Use a dolly or wheelbarrow instead of carrying bags of leaves, grass clippings or other yard debris to the curb for pickup.
- Never lift by simply bending over. Instead, make the left muscles do most of the work. Grasp objects while squatting, and then lift by raising the entire body, keeping the weight over the legs.
- Rake and dig only for brief periods of time. Take frequent rest breaks and alternate between left-side and right-side raking and digging.
- When loading a wheelbarrow, load material toward the front using the wheel as a pivot and use your legs to lift the wheelbarrow.
- Get assistance when lifting large bags of potting soil, mulch, fertilizer or large potted plants.
- When using a push mower, push with your legs and maintain good posture.
- Make sure you stay well hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids to replace what you have lost. This will help decrease fatigue and the chance of injury.