



# Halifax Chiropractic Clinic



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## **Spring Clean-up – Ouch!!** by Dr. Brian S. Seaman, DC, FCCSS(C), FICC

### ***Where do I start?***

The back yard, the basement, the garage, the shed?? – Oh where should I start?

Yes this is the often asked question this time of year. The snow is vanishing (or hopefully has gone!) and it's now time to start developing a plan for your spring clean-up. There is always lots to do but can come with a price – Ouch!! – **back pain**. Back pain is a common complaint with many people---up to 80% of Canadians will experience a significant episode of back pain during their lives. While shovelling wet snow can be a strain so can 'spring clean-up'.

There are really two important things to consider:

- Am I physically ready for this?
- Establish a plan of action.

This two are important and actually related to one another. Trying to do too much can overtire your back muscles and lead to a painful injury involving the joints of your spine or even worse; the disc. The first step would be to formulate a plan.

### **“THE PLAN”**

#### ***What has to be done?***

Break the task down into different areas. Where do you want to start? Usually the front yard comes first followed by the back yard, garage, shed and last but not least the basement. However, if the weather is still a bit cold then it might be best to tackle the basement first and get it out of the way.

#### ***What are the priorities?***

Do you have any tree damage from the winter storms? If there is a lot, it might be best to hire professionals to take care of it. There may be some seasonal tasks to deal with as soon as weather permits like fertilizing the lawn or pruning the shrubs, bushes or hedge. There is always a lot to do, and each individual household has a difference focus.

### **“The schedule”**

Everything cannot be done in a day – as much as we would like to have it that way. If your Spring clean-up is limited to the weekend, divide up the tasks over 3-4 months. If your schedule is such that you can do things during the week, break the list into smaller tasks.

### **Are you ready for clean-up??**

Not yet – the schedule might be set and the priorities clear but there is one other component that is of the utmost importance – **YOU!!** It is not unusual for many of us to be a bit more sedentary over the cold winter months. Going to work in the dark, and coming home in the dark, is not very appealing. Darkness in the evening also means that we tend not to get out as much. If you have been less physically active, you are not going to be as fit as perhaps you were at the end of last summer.

Checking with your chiropractor is a good place to start with an exercise program designed to strengthen your neck and back muscles. If you already have a program, but haven't been very faithful with it over the winter, check with your chiropractor to see if it needs to be modified, revised or upgraded.

Another component of your fitness is your **heart**. Cardiovascular health is very important and essential to our well-being. Be sure to have regular check-ups with your family physician to

ensure that the increased activity you anticipate over the next few months, will not cause any difficulties. Do not take chances with your heart – we only get one of these!

### **Yard Work and your Back**

Remember how stiff your back can get if you are bent over for too long? Are your muscles tired, achy and sore at the end of the day?

Attention to our body position when working in the yard or the garden can be a key factor in maintaining a healthy back. Here are a few hints:

- Warm-up
- Do not bend over or reach overhead for extended periods of time. This can strain your back and neck.
- Do not lift excessively or repeatedly. If you need help, ask!

### **Injured your back?**

Stop what you are doing if you injure your back. Start applying ice to the area 20 minutes every couple of hours. If the pain is severe, is extending into your arm or leg (with or without tingling or numbness), or does not ease within 12-24 hours of beginning the ice, consult with your health care professional.

As a chiropractor, I see neck and back injuries on a regular basis. Most involve the joints and muscles of the spine, and in fact, very few involve the disc. That's the good news. Actually there is even more good news – if you injure your disc, chances are you will not need surgery. While there are some cases that do need surgery, most will respond to conservative care under the direction and assistance of an experienced health care professional.

### **What to do now?**

Start planning. Warm, milder days are coming soon. Get your supplies ready and begin to plan the garden too. Start walking and do a bit of exercise. Get your check-up scheduled. And last but not least – enjoy the springtime! The days will get longer!

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