



## Taking the strain out of gardening

Most people do not consider gardening an exercise, yet it is hard work and many people are not prepared for it, especially after a long winter break.

Now that spring / summer is here, we are sure that many of you are hard at work in the garden.

Start with a few warm – up exercises before digging. Bend and stretch your back a few times to limber up.

Digging and shovelling involves bending, twisting and lifting, all of which can cause the type of back injury we see regularly at The Wye Physiotherapy Practice. Here are a few suggestions for safe digging:

- Don` t stoop. Keep the back straight and slightly arched. The muscles in your legs are stronger than the muscles in your back.
- Don` t stay in the same position too long. Take frequent breaks. Either do a task that requires a different working position or take a stroll around your garden.
- Invest in long handled trowels and forks.
- Avoid over reaching. Move closer to the job in hand.

Be careful when pulling up that stubborn shrub or roots from the flower bed. Use your leg muscles, not your back. Move backwards with your knees slightly bent, allowing your knees to take the strain.

When weeding and planting, kneel down on a mat, use special knee pads or a kneeler. If you really find kneeling difficult, a long term solution might be to establish some raised beds or make more use of tubs, containers and pots. Finally, ensure your gardening equipment is right for your height and build.

Are the handles long enough? Is it too heavy?

If you have a hover mower or strimmer, don` t swing them from side to side. Turn your whole body in line with the machine.

Please remember, if you have any long lasting problems, you need to consult your GP or a Physiotherapist.