



## Keep Fit with Gardening



Gardening helps keep us fit. It works and stretches our muscles. However, it can be **hard** on other parts of the body, especially our back and knees.

### Don't overdo it!!

Here is some advice from our friendly physiotherapists on how to keep fit with gardening and avoid the physical drawbacks from the activity.

#### Their general advice is to:

- start with short bursts of 30 minutes, 2 or 3 times a week. If you feel okay after this, increase the time (don't double it!).
- change activities after 10 minutes.
- keep a bottle of water with you and sip regularly (dehydration causes headaches and tiredness).
- avoid gardening at the hottest time of the day in full sun.
- remember your hat and sunscreen.



#### Advice to save your back and knees:

- Stop and stretch (especially your back and knees).
- If kneeling, use a cushion.
- Kneel or get on your hands and knees while doing activities, rather than bend over.
- Kneel for maximum of 15 minutes, then change activity
- Install raised beds.
- If you have trouble getting down to the ground and up, use a 'kneeler' with handles, or leave a solid chair in the garden areas so you always have a support to use getting up – and somewhere to sit once you do get up!
- Do all jobs as close to your body as possible eg weed with your hands close to you, not reaching out
- Carry all loads close to your body.
- Don't overfill bags you have to carry, eg weeds compost – use a wheelbarrow or sack barrow
- Use the 'lunge' rocking movement using your legs when raking or sweeping – it's much easier on your back than stretching and bending.
- If you have sore or disabled hands you can get gardening equipment to suit.

If you want more advice on gardening safely as you age, our friendly physios and occupational therapists can help, contact us as follows:

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