



Physiotherapists:
The Body Specialists

Physio Tips

**RAKING
LEAVES**

Physiotherapy Association of BC

LEAF OUT PAIN AND STRAIN

While raking can be a good way to enjoy moderate exercise, too much twisting, reaching, bending, lifting and carrying bags of leaves can place excessive loading on the spine, resulting in back strain or more serious injuries.

Before starting, Physiotherapists recommend:

- Warm-up exercises for the larger muscle groups such as the shoulders, back and the legs before (and after) all yard work.
- Well-fitting shoes with good soles will prevent slipping and give your back better support.

RAKING TIPS

- Hold the rake handle close to your body to help maintain good posture while raking. Keep one hand near the top for better leverage and use your arms and legs more than your spine. Ergonomic rakes, sold in garden centres across the country, have bent or side handles or handles that are padded for less strain on the hands and wrists. This design ensures that the elbows are bent slightly and also encourages good posture;
- Change sides frequently and avoid twisting from the waist. When raking, the tendency is to plant the feet in a fixed position and rake in several directions from that position. Instead, place one foot ahead of the other which allows you to shift forward and backward easily as you rake;
- Take frequent breaks and/or change to a different activity.

BAGGING TIPS

- When bagging leaves, lift manageable loads. Keep your back straight and use your legs to do the lifting. If you have to stoop, face the pile of leaves and don't twist as you lift;
- Don't try to overreach to get those last few leaves;
- When lifting the bag of leaves, tense your stomach muscles to give your back additional support and keep the bag close to the body.

- Keep your back straight while lifting with the legs;
- Don't pile too many leaves into one bag, especially if they're wet – it will be heavy and awkward to lift;
- When finished for the day, take a few moments to cool down by doing the same exercises performed prior to raking.

HEALTH TIPS

- Stay fit, stay healthy and engage in regular exercise so that fall and spring cleanup won't take as much of a toll.
- Active exercises such as gentle, progressive stretching of muscles may help relieve muscle stiffness and soreness;
- If soreness persists for a couple of days, consult your physiotherapist.

Physiotherapists are experts in movement and mobility, body mechanics, muscles and joints. They will help develop an exercise program specially-tailored to your needs, putting together the right combination of activities to improve physical fitness and avoid injury.



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