

Avoiding Injury During Cooler Months

Many people suffer injuries during the cooler months – not just sports injuries but falls and other injuries around the home. How can these be avoided?

What are the most common injuries in the cooler months?

- People pruning trees, cleaning gutters and doing other domestic cleaning can suffer a range of injuries to their back, neck and shoulders.
- In the colder months, falls are common especially when the footpaths are wet or icy.
- People standing outside in cool conditions – especially if the wind is cool – can develop sore necks, shoulders and backs.
- Sports injuries are common – people playing football or running often injure their ankles or calves and people who work out at the gym can suffer a range of injuries including back and shoulder problems.

What can we do to prevent injury doing outside chores?

- If you're going to work on a ladder, plan ahead to have somebody there to steady it – don't risk falling! And if you're going to work up high, consider using a harness!
- Remember that looking up or reaching up for a few hours can cause neck and shoulder pain – be sure to take regular breaks and stretch.
- Check what's around you before you start – don't risk tripping over or backing into something that could have been moved.
- Be realistic about what you can lift and carry – often people hurt their backs by carrying a heavy load to finish a job quickly.

What about inside the home?

- In cooler months our ankles, knees and back may be stiff and sluggish first thing in the morning – take this into consideration and don't try to move too quickly when you first get up.
- If you're a bit unsteady on your feet, consider having a handrail or chair in the bathroom so you can hold it while you put on pants – people falling while dressing is surprisingly common!
- Stay warm at night especially in bed – cold muscles are difficult to move and cause or aggravate an injury.

How do avoid injury when going out?

- Dress for the weather and potential changes – stay warm: a jacket, a scarf and wind proof if it's breezy and a hat. If it's likely to rain, remember a raincoat!
- Footwear appropriate for the conditions is important: stilettos and slippery footpaths don't mix!
- If you have a sore back or neck and you're going to watch a sporting event, consider taking a disposable heat pad.

And avoiding injury while exercising?

- A good warm up is vital before doing anything strenuous – cold muscles don't stretch easily and are prone to injury.
- Layer clothing and take it off gradually as you warm up.
- Remember to put warm clothing back on as soon as you finish exercising - if possible, take off sweaty clothing before putting on warm, dry clothes.
- Stretch after you finish exercising – if you're outside, it may be best to put on warm clothing first as a breeze may cool you down too quickly especially if you're sweaty.
- Drink plenty of water – even when it's cold, we still need water as we exercise.