

Life Times

A quarterly publication to enhance the quality of life of individuals, families, and communities

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Eight tips for healthy gardening

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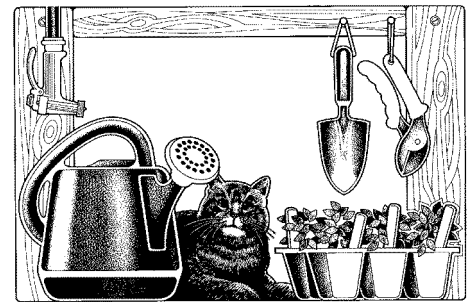
Did you know gardening is the number one leisure activity in the United States? Gardening can be therapeutic for the mind, body and spirit—and also a form of exercise. One hour of weeding burns about 300 calories. (If you need a place to weed, I have plenty at my house.)

Gardening can promote increased range of motion, help improve motor skills and help develop hand-eye coordination. Gardening also can be used for physical therapy, as a hobby or as a way to provide fresh food at low costs.

Despite numerous benefits to gardening, some drawbacks exist as well. Many gardeners can relate to the aches and pains often associated with working in the garden. Think about what gardening entails: stooping low to the ground, sometimes using heavy, sharp tools, and staying in the same physical position for long periods of time. Walking over uneven ground can be dangerous as well.

You don't have to succumb to all of the physical challenges of gardening. By adjusting your body position and modifying your gardening tools, you will be able to spend more time "in the trenches" and less time nursing that sore hand or back.

The following eight-point plan can help you recognize your body's capabilities and enjoy gardening more.



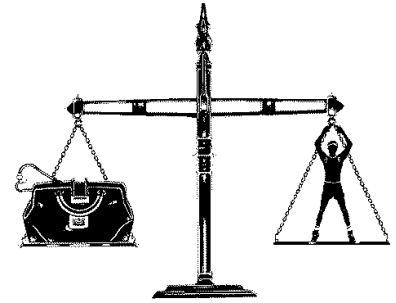
While gardening can be fun and relaxing, it can also create aches and pains for your body.

- 1. Remember gardening is exercise.**
As with any exercise, it is important to warm up your muscles before beginning physical activity. Do light stretching before you start working in the garden, especially of your arms, legs, neck and back.
- 2. Change body positions frequently to avoid overworking one set of muscles.** Don't hold one position too long or do any one activity for too long a time. Move around, and shake out those worked muscles. Change hands, and take frequent breaks. Create rest areas as part of your garden by placing decorative benches or garden chairs in shady spots around the garden. If you have been bending over, weeding for a while, give your back a break and do an activity that allows you to sit or stand up straight. And while we are talking about standing up, remember what your mother told you: Stand up straight! Your lower back muscles will thank you later on.

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Your path to optimum health: A balancing act!

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How do you feel? Are you as healthy as you can be? Does it seem like it is harder to make healthy choices and stick to them?

How often have we told ourselves we'll start making better choices after the holiday season is over? Most times we mean what we say because we really *do* want to be healthy. Yet sooner or later we fall back into unhealthy habits.

Healthful eating is much more than a diet. The path to good health isn't the same for everyone. To travel down your personal path, take small steps that are right for you. A healthier you is not about what you deny yourself. Rather, it's about *choices* (in your daily food and physical activity) and *balance* (making room in your life for what makes you happy and health).

Here are some tips for helping you achieve a healthier you:

Set small achievable goals.

Determine whether you want to lose weight, lower cholesterol or blood pressure, feel better, or set a better example for your family. Your nutritional goals should work towards incorporating variety and moderation, taking into account both the *kinds* of food and the *amounts* of food you eat.

Eat 100 fewer calories each day.

The following examples will get you started on the right path:

- Skip the butter on your roll
- Limit yourself to one roll
- Choose reduced-calorie vinaigrette dressing instead of regular creamy-type dressing

- Substitute a salad with low-fat dressing for fries at a restaurant
- Choose skim milk and fat-free yogurt
- Use mustard instead of mayonnaise on your sandwich
- Use non-stick cooking spray instead of butter or oil
- Eat half your portion of dessert
- Use light syrup on pancakes
- Select grilled chicken instead of fried

Remember: Small steps can reap big rewards.

- Choose a vegetable or chicken noodle soup instead of a creamed soup
- Eat 12 baby carrots instead of a 1-ounce bag of potato chips for a snack
- Eat a bowl of cereal with skim milk instead of a sweet roll for breakfast
- Replace butter with sour cream on your baked potato.

Balance calories and activity.

Eating 100 extra calories per day leads to a gain of approximately 10 pounds per year, while 2,000 extra steps (about a mile) per day burns approximately 100 calories. Remember: Small steps can reap big rewards. Take a few more steps, eat a few less calories. Watch your portion sizes to ensure you are not taking more

calories than your body needs since extra calories are converted into weight gain. Visit www.mypyramid.gov to determine how many calories are right for you.

Make physical activity part of your lifestyle.

- Add 15 minutes of activity to your daily routine, whether it's walking, playing with the kids, swimming, or another activity you enjoy.
- When given the choice between walking or driving, choose walking.
- Each weekend day, spend an hour doing something physically active, like gardening, hiking, playing a sport, taking a fitness class.
- Find an activity you enjoy; chances are you'll stick with it.
- Visit www.smallstep.gov for more ideas to increase physical activity.

Use the buddy system.

Buddies provide encouragement and can be co-workers, spouses, friends or your pet!

Source: Diabetes Life Lines. (Fall 2004). University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service. Available at: www.fcs.uga.edu

Identity theft hits close to home

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Unfortunately, there is no full-proof way to prevent identity theft. The best way to protect yourself is to make it difficult for identity thieves to get your personal and financial information.

How thieves get your information

Identity thieves can get personal information by stealing a wallet or purse; stealing mail out of mailboxes; “dumpster diving” for personal information on discarded, unshredded documents; or getting information over the Internet by posing as legitimate businesses, such as your bank.

BUT, don't overlook the identity thief who may be closer to home. When at work, do you leave personal documents around your desk? At home, do you leave mail lying around? Do you leave important papers on a desk—in plain view—or in an unlocked, but visible, file cabinet? Identity thieves can work in your office; they can be service people who are in and out of your home; they can be your friends or your children's friends; or, unfortunately, they can even be family members.

In a 2003 Federal Trade Commission (FTC) study of identity fraud victims, 25 percent of respondents said they knew who had committed the crime, and 50 percent of those turned out to be relatives, friends or neighbors. These figures are likely low because cases often don't get reported to the FTC or local police when an identity thief is a family member or close friend.

How thieves use your information

Identity thieves use your personal information in many ways. They may establish phone or wireless service in your name, apply for credit cards and loans in your name (even car and home loans), make charges on current credit cards, and they may withdraw money from your bank accounts by forging checks, making electronic transfers, or using your ATM/debit card.

More recently, identity thieves have been known to get medical care using your personal information and even your insurance information. According to the FTC, of the reports of identity theft in Missouri to the Federal Trade Commission in 2005, 28 percent were credit card ID theft fraud, 23 percent were phone or ID theft fraud, and 19 percent were bank ID theft fraud.

If a friend or family member obtains your personal information and makes charges on a current account, or withdraws money from your bank account, *you will be required to assist in their prosecution to have the charges to your account reversed, or to have the money reinstated to your bank account.*

Many people do not want to assist in prosecuting family members, so they will have to absorb losses from identity theft themselves.

Here are a few examples of identity theft by family and friends: 1) sibling purchased a car in his brother's name; 2) soon-to-be ex-spouse stole wife's and son's information and played games with their respective bank accounts; 3) son regularly took mother's ATM card at night and withdrew thousands of

dollars; 4) grown daughter charged her mother's credit card; 5) family friend opened cell phone in friend's name; 6) co-worker copied credit card number and code, then made credit card charges.

How to protect yourself

Protecting your credit is crucial. Your credit report impacts your ability to get housing, insurance, loans, or even a job. Victims of identity theft can spend as long as two years and \$1400 to clean up their credit identity.

Minimize your risk by making it difficult for an identity thief to get your information.

- **Protect your social security number.**
- **Guard incoming and outgoing mail.** Don't mail bills or documents containing personal information from your mailbox. Shred credit card offers, bills, old bank statements, credit card checks, or any personal information.
- **Opt out of pre-approved credit offers.** Consumer reporting agencies offer a toll-free number: 1-888-5OPTOUT (888-567-8688).
- **Order copies of your free credit report** from all three major consumer reporting agencies at least once every 12 months. Review your report for information that is incorrect or not yours. Visit www.annualcreditreport.com.
- **Keep personal information out of sight, even at home.** Don't leave mail, checks or personal information in public traffic areas.

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Eight tips for healthy gardening

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- 3. Keep elbows tucked in, close to your sides, when moving heavy loads or raking.** This action causes the upper muscles in your arms to share some of the workload with your hands and forearms. By doing this, muscles in those areas won't tire so quickly.
- 4. Use the laws of physics to your advantage.** You gain more power by creating more leverage. Choose longer-handled tools, and grip the tools closer to your body to increase leverage.
- 5. When using hand tools, avoid digging with a "jab and twist" motion; use chopping motions instead.** For example, digging a hole with a small hand trowel requires bending and twisting your wrist. This creates strain and tires wrist muscles. Use a larger spade instead that allows you to "chop" a hole, using your larger arm muscles to pull soil

towards you. This will be less painful to sensitive hands.

- 6. Use lightweight tools.** Many sturdy garden tools made of nylon and reinforced fiberglass are available at garden centers. These are much lighter than traditional metal tools, so it takes less energy to hold and use them.
- 7. Use a mailbox to store small hand tools in the garden.** Decorative mailboxes can add charm to your garden and let you store tools right where you need them.
- 8. Hand tools with larger grips are easier to hold and use.** Tools with larger grips require less squeezing force from your hands, so your hands won't tire as quickly. You can enlarge or soften the tool handles yourself.

While gardening can be fun and relaxing, it also can create aches and pains for your body. By remembering these tips, you can minimize the time you spend nursing stresses and strains and more time enjoying the fruits of your gardening labors!

Identity theft hits close to home

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If possible, lock up personal information and financial documents. Do NOT share account PIN numbers or passwords with anyone—even a spouse—unless the person shares the account. It is better to take preventative measures than to have to decide "to prosecute or not to prosecute."

If you are a victim of identity theft

- **Notify the fraud department** of one of the three national credit reporting agencies and place a fraud alert on your credit report. The agency will contact the other bureaus.
- **File a police report** with your local police.
- **File a report** with the FTC.
- **Close accounts you know have been used for fraud** or believe are at risk for fraud.
- **Notify creditors that your identity has been stolen.**
- **Visit Websites** with information on dealing with ID Theft: www.consumer.gov/idtheft/ and www.idtheftcenter.org/index.shtml

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