



# Your Prescription for a Healthy Holiday

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*Courtesy of:*

- Peterborough Physiotherapy and Sports Injuries Clinic (705) 741-2284
  - Trent Health in Motion (705) 741-4758
- Lakefield Physiotherapy & Foot Health Clinic (705) 652-6999
  - Chemong Physiotherapy - (705) 292-9888
- Lindsay Rehab Health Centre - (705) 324-0404
  - Lindsay Physiotherapy - (705) 324-8512

*The Holiday Season, though welcome, is often a hectic time.*

*You may not realize that in the midst of all the hustle and bustle you are, in fact, quite prone to provoking injuries. That's why we're offering some light-hearted, but important, festive season health and safety tips.*

## Tree Cutting Tips

1. If possible, aim to get a Christmas tree on a pleasant winter day. If temperatures are biting, dress in lots of layers so that you can remove extra clothing as you warm up. Wear durable gloves to protect fingers from the cold. Remember that in below zero temperatures little people can get frost-bite in hands and feet within a short time.
2. When sawing, stay close to the tree and kneel to secure yourself or bend your knees. Don't bend your back. Make sure the tree falls into a clear path away from you.
3. Don't carry your tree to your vehicle, drag or pull it on a light-weight sled. Enlist as much help as you can. When lifting the tree onto your vehicle, lift using your leg muscles and not your back.

## Decorating Tips

1. If putting up strings of lights outside, you can avoid shoulder and neck strain by using a ladder to raise you within easy reach of your work area. For

instance, position your ladder close to the window or door and try to maintain good posture by keeping your back straight. If possible, work with a helper to ease the burden of wrestling with long lengths of lights.

2. If decorating a large Christmas tree, use a sturdy ladder when placing lights that are above shoulder height so you're not straining to reach up. Take frequent breaks to stretch shoulder, neck and back muscles in order to avoid muscle strain and spasm.
3. When wrapping gifts, remember to sit down in order to relieve the pressure on your back. Wrapping presents bent over from a standing position is not only awkward but uncomfortable.

## Holiday Shopping Tips

1. Don't shop until you drop! Try to be realistic about how much shopping you can do at once. Limit yourself to 2 to 4 hour mini-shopping blitzes. When you are feeling tired take a break to replenish fluids and stretch weary muscles.

- Carrying coats, packages and heavy shopping bags for long periods of time puts a lot of strain on neck, shoulder and upper back muscles. It can also aggravate arthritis as well as chronic back and neck problems. To be easier on yourself, deposit heavy parcels in your vehicle or in a locker.




### Turkey Tango Tips

- Lifting a 10 kg (15-20 lb) turkey or roast out of the oven can put up to 100 kg of pressure on your spinal column. You can reduce back problems when putting your turkey into the oven by first pulling the oven rack out as fully as it will go while still remaining secure.
- When lifting the turkey out of the oven, bend your knees and lift the weight with your legs and buttock muscles, keeping your back straight. Keep the roasting pan close to your body when you lift. Put the turkey back in the oven using the same steps in reverse.


### Stretches to Make Your Holiday Cheer Go Further

The following are a few simple stretches you can do before launching into tasks such as stringing up holiday lights. These stretches will also help ease fatigue on muscle groups if done frequently during prolonged projects. Remember to perform each stretch slowly and without bouncing. Do each until you feel a slight easy stretch and hold for up to 30 seconds.

#### Arms & Shoulders

- Interlace your fingers above your head with your palms facing upwards. Stretch upwards and you should feel it in your arms, shoulders and upper back. Hold for 15 seconds. 
- Hold onto one elbow with your opposite hand, gently pulling that elbow back behind your head. Hold for 15-20 seconds. Do the same with the other elbow. 
- Shrug your shoulders upwards towards your ears. Hold the shrug for 3-5 seconds, then relax. Repeat this 2-3 times. 

### Back, Legs & Hips

- Position your arm and elbow as shown in diagram 2, but do while standing with knees slightly bent. When you gently pull your elbow behind your head, bend from your hips to the side opposite your elbow. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat this stretch on the other side. 



- Stretch your calf by leaning against a solid support with your forearms. Place one leg forward, bending from the knee with foot flat. Leave the other leg straight, behind you. Slowly move your hips forward until you feel the stretch in the calf muscle of your straight leg.

Hold an easy stretch for 30 seconds. Stretch out your other calf the same way.

- Use a sturdy railing or wall to help maintain your balance. Bend your right knee backwards at a natural angle and hold the top of your right foot with your left hand. Gently stretch by holding for 30 seconds. Switch to stretch other knee and quads.



### Other Important Tips

- Be Kind to Your Back**  
Long hours spent standing to do holiday cooking or baking can be very hard on your back. Keep a footstool near the counter you are working at and rest one foot on it to relieve pressure from the back. As an alternative, open the lower cupboard and rest one foot on the bottom shelf.
- Treat Muscle Pain Early**  
If you suffer from aches and strained muscles after holiday preparations, try using ice packs to decrease soreness. Follow this with a hot bath every 2 hours. (Make your bath more relaxing by sipping on a hot cider!) Soaking in the tub will help increase circulation to the sore area. Also remember that active rehabilitation such as gentle, progressive stretching of muscles will help relieve pain and soreness.

For more information contact:

Peterborough Physiotherapy and Sports Injuries Clinic - (705) 741-2284 - peterboroughphysio@bellnet.ca  
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 Lakefield Physiotherapy & Foot Health Clinic - (705) 652-6999 - lakefieldphysioandfoot@bellnet.ca  
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 Lindsay Physiotherapy - (705) 324-8512 - lindsayphysiotherapy@bellnet.ca

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