Spring Cleaning

Spring cleaning can put families at great risk for falls and poisonings. Keep in mind these safe practices while cleaning your garage, home, and yard.

To prevent these two leading causes of home injury in America, you should:
- Always keep stairs, steps, and landings clear of toys and clutter
- When cleaning walls and ceilings, take the time to first replace burned out light bulbs that may be over stairs and steps
- Watch where you’re going, and hold railings when going down stairs
- Keep walkways clear of cords and wires
- When using a ladder, follow safety guidelines and stand at or below the highest safe standing level
- Make sure ladder rungs are dry and the ladder is securely positioned on a flat surface
- When using chemicals, follow product label safety recommendations
- Do not mix household cleaning products together, as the contents could react with dangerous results
- Keep children away from cleaning supplies

Follow these guidelines, and you will have a better and safer spring cleaning experience.

Back Safety

Most back injuries occur over a long period of time, typically resulting from improper lifting techniques that slowly weaken the back versus one incident of lifting something heavy. Safe lifting techniques include:
- Assessing an object’s size and weight and your ability to balance it before lifting
- Keeping your back straight and legs bent
- Keeping the object close to your body while lifting, carrying and setting
- Clearing your path and watching where you’re headed

To prevent an injury to the back:
- DO NOT lift with your back bowed out
- DO NOT bend and reach or twist and jerk your back for any reason while lifting or carrying a heavy object

In addition to these tips, lack of proper sleep, obesity, poor nutrition, and a stressful work and life style can also cause back pain or injury.
The Dangers of Stress

Stress is what you feel when you have more on your mind and more on your plate than you are typically used to. When you are stressed, your body responds as though you are in trouble. It releases hormones that speed up your heart, make you breathe faster, and give you a burst of energy. This is called the fight-or-flight response or your stress response.

A certain level of stress is normal and even useful. Stress can help in circumstances that require you to work hard or react quickly. Stress can help you win a race or finish an important task on time.

But if stress happens too often or lasts too long, it can have negative effects. Stress can be linked to headaches, upset stomach, back pain, and trouble sleeping. It can weaken your immune system, making it harder to fight off colds. If you already have a health issue, stress may worsen your condition.

Stress is a fact of life for most people. While you may not be able to eliminate stress completely, you can lower it by doing certain exercises or by changing your life style.

Tips for managing stress:

• Take good care of yourself. Get plenty of rest. Eat well. Don’t smoke, and limit how much alcohol you drink.
• Learn better ways to manage your time. You may get more done with less stress if you make a schedule. Think about which things are most important, and do those first.
• Examine your coping skills. Look at how you have been dealing with stress. Be honest about what works and what does not. Seek opportunities to learn techniques that might work better.
• Try out new ways of thinking. When you find yourself starting to worry, try to stop the thoughts using meditation or relaxation. Work on letting go of things that you have no control over.
• Speak up. Assertive communication can help you express how you feel in a thoughtful, tactful way.
• Ask for help. People who have a strong network of family and friends manage stress better.
• Utilize the Employee Assistance Program at HelpNet: 800-523-0591 or 269-372-4500

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Watch for more issues of the Safety Post. Contact Andrew Stokes with suggestions and ideas for future topics.