When people think of exercise - they generally don’t think of household chores or yard work. Believe it or not, you could be burning up to 300 calories an hour! Any household chore or yard work that involves bending, reaching, digging or lifting can be considered exercise.

Muscles and joints in your back may become sore or stiff after doing these activities. However by doing some light stretching prior to beginning the chores, soreness and pain may be prevented. When stretching remember these key points:

- Hold a stretch for 15 seconds
- Repeat each stretch 3 times
- Maintain the position and do not bounce or jerk
- Stretching should be gentle and not painful in any way

Try these great stretches before your next household activity or yard work:

**Standing Torso Stretch** - Stand with feet outside shoulder width, toes pointing straight ahead. Place your left hand on your left hip for support and reach your right arm up over your head, while bending your torso to the left. Feel a stretch in the torso. Switch sides and repeat 3 times.

**Shoulder Stretch** - Stand with feet hip width apart slightly bent at the knees. Cross your left arm over your body so it is near to the right shoulder and place your right hand on the left arm below or above the elbow for support. Extend until you feel a slight stretch in your shoulder. Repeat each side 3 times.

**Upper Back Stretch** - Stand with legs slightly bent and hip width apart. With arms straight, clasp your fingers in front of you while keeping your back firm and your body upright. Gently push your hand away from you to shoulder height (maximum) until you feel a gentle stretch across the upper back. Repeat 3 times.

**Neck Stretch** - Sit tall on step or chair, holding side of chair with left hand and reach right hand over hand, placing right hand on left ear. Drop right ear down to right shoulder, stopping when you feel mild tension. Hold for 15 seconds. Repeat each side 3 times.

**Lower Back Stretch** - Lie on your back with your feet flat on the floor and your knees bent on a mat or the floor. Hold the tops of shins with your hands and bring both knees in close to your chest. Pull your knees gently into your body until you feel a stretch in the lower back. Repeat 3 times.