

Joint specialist offers tips on how to help farmers prevent knee injuries

As Summer Crops Grow, So Does the Strains on Farmers' Bodies

As farmers spend extra time caring for their crops as we head into the hot summer months, their knees and joints often don't receive the same level of attention.

Dr. Charles Schuster, owner of Back To Health Non-Surgical Pain Solutions, said July is the time of year when he sees more farming-related strains and pains. Dr. Schuster, who has been treating patients locally for 26 years, said the long hours farmers spend alternating between extreme activities such as crouching up and down, lifting heavy loads and climbing up and down stairs, combined with long hours of sitting in combines, can be a recipe for knee, back, and joint problems.

"Some of the most common injuries we see in farmers are patellar tendinitis, in which pain is usually felt in

the lower part of the kneecap, ligament tears, meniscal tears and knee osteoarthritis in addition to other general back injuries," said Dr. Schuster. "The problem is that once an individual starts having pain, they often try to compensate for it by putting additional strain on other parts of their body. Repeatedly reinjuring or straining the same joints or muscles is what can lead to arthritis and further complications down the road. Knee replacement surgery is, unfortunately, a fairly common but serious occurrence for people who deal with long term knee problems and our goal is to prevent that from happening."

Dr. Schuster said there are several simple preventative measures farmers can take to avoid long-term knee and joint problems. He recommends people vary their posture when spend-



ing long hours stooping and squatting and try to give their knees a chance to rest between strenuous activities. He said another simple measure people can take is to use vibration-dampening

seat cushions in their farm equipment.

"Farmers may not always be aware that spending long hours sitting in a machine that has very heavy vibrations can actual-

ly accelerate knee problems in addition to other joint issues, especially when it's also cold outside," said Dr. Schuster. "Ideally, we'd want to encourage people to take simple steps like this now to prevent further problems down the road. It can often mean the difference between simple changes and techniques which allow the body to heal itself or undergoing intensive surgeries later on."

Dr. Schuster said his office also offers several non-invasive treatments which can help alleviate pain such as Platelet Rich Plasma therapy, which utilizes a patient's own blood platelets to help prevent arthritis, Prolotherapy, which helps loosen strained muscles and allows them to heal naturally, and Non Surgical Spinal Decompression, which relies on advanced technology to create negative pres-

sure in the discs and has a 91 percent success rate with herniated discs.

Back to Health Non-Surgical Pain Solutions, which recently became a National Disc Centers of America Practice, offers a wide variety of pain relief treatments for conditions such as arthritis, back pain, neuropathy, sciatica, plantar fasciitis, as well as shoulder, neck, elbow and hand pain. The office also specializes in laser therapy, and other whole body wellness treatments. It is one of the only clinics in the area which provides a combination of physiotherapy, chiropractic and regenerative medicine. The business is located at 25 W. Lincoln Avenue in Charleston. For more information about their services, go to www.myback2health.com or call 217-345-9600.

Standards ensure fresh fruits and vegetables are ripe, ready and safe

By Katie Zelechowski
Illinois Farm Bureau

Have you ever gotten home with a bag of fresh produce and wondered what to do with it? Do those colorful fruits and veggies go immediately in the fridge, or are you supposed to wash them off first?

The short answer is that you should always wash your fruits and vegetables before eating them.

Even prewashed foods, like leafy greens, should be rinsed, according to Illinois Farm Bureau Associate Director of Food Systems Development Raghela Scavuzzo. She recommends washing produce with a hard, peelable skin ahead of time but waiting to clean off soft fruits, such as strawberries or blueberries, until right before you plan to eat them.

"We're not talking about extensive washing

— just enough to wash the dirt off and make sure it's clean," she said.

Farmers also play a vital role in ensuring the food we eat is grown in a safe, affordable and environmentally friendly way. With help from state and national regulatory agencies, families can focus on making memories while cooking fun summer recipes, rather than worrying about the safety of ingredients.

Under the Food Quality Protection Act, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) establishes safe pesticide residue levels for commodities. Once levels are established, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) monitors them and the Food and Drug Administration enforces them.

"When all of these are put together, I think it should give consumers confidence that we are liv-

ing up to food quality protection (standards)," said Brenda Foos, director for the USDA Agricultural Marketing Services Monitoring Programs Division.

USDA collects food samples from distribution centers near consumers and tests them for pesticide residue levels. Fresh and processed fruits and vegetables, dairy products, nuts, greens, honey and bottled water are examined in the program.

Nine states, including Illinois, participate in the collection process and state agencies help USDA test the samples.

More than 600 samples of 14 different commodities are tested for pesticide residue each year, totaling nearly 10,000 samples of conventionally and organically grown foods.

High-consumption commodities are rotated through the program every five years.

"We just don't have the resources to monitor all foods every year," Foos said.

Over the past five years combined, less than 1 percent of tested food samples showed levels that exceeded set tolerances, while nearly 99 percent remained within acceptable ranges.

"Data continues to show that when pesticide residues are found on foods, they are nearly always at levels below the tolerances for maximum residue levels that are set by the Environmental Protection Agency," Foos said.

2019 was the first time in 30 years that the rate exceeded 1 percent. Foos said the increase, which reached 1.29 percent, was largely due to a single commodity — basil.

"Basil accounted for nearly 75 percent of the samples that exceeded the

tolerance," she said.

The EPA responded by revising tolerances for herbs and spices, including basil, which Foos said should alleviate any concerns.

Under the federal Food Safety Modernization Act, every farm that sells fruits and vegetables in Illinois must comply with industry standards and sanitation guidelines.

"There's a whole list of regulations that our farms have to follow to make sure that the product is as safe as possible before it can get into your hands," said Scavuzzo, who also serves as executive director for the Illinois Specialty Growers Association.

Training includes learning how to deal with wildlife in crop fields and how to apply pesticides safely.

"While all of the things farmers do is important, it's just as important for

consumers to wash their fruits and vegetables," Scavuzzo said.

"It's better to wash things off than to regret it later," she added.

The best way to make sure your produce is safe is to talk with the farmers who grew it.

"The reason people go to U-pick farms or farmers markets is because they like getting to know the farmers who grow their food. That's often the best opportunity to talk about why farmers make certain decisions, like choosing to raise crops conventionally or organically," Scavuzzo said.

"At the end of the day, they're feeding their families the same food you're eating — food really connects us all."

This story was distributed through a cooperative project between Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Press Association.

Lake Land College updates COVID pandemic safety protocols

In accordance with new guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), Lake Land College's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Team will be implementing new pandemic response safety protocols to protect the college community.

"Since announcing our return to a more traditional campus environment and in-person class offerings for the fall, the college has been closely monitoring the rapid spread of the COVID-19 Delta variant and guidelines issued by the CDC and IDPH. Knowing that a majority of the counties in our college district are at CDC's "Substantial" or "High" risk levels for community transmission, we are taking these measures to ensure a safe and effective learning environment," Lake Land College President Josh Bullock said.

Effective August 4,

masks covering the nose and mouth will be required for all individuals at all times while inside campus buildings, regardless of vaccination status. Masks can be removed when alone in an enclosed room with the door shut or in a designated eating area on campus.

All plans for in-person services, classes, events and meetings will continue as planned, maintaining social distancing whenever feasible while indoors. For the fall semester, students can select from in-person, virtual and online courses to build a schedule that best suits their needs.

Employees, students and visitors coming to a college facility are encouraged to self-screen for COVID-19 symptoms prior to visiting campus and to refrain from visiting if feeling ill.

Pandemic safety protocols are subject to change with direction provided by the CDC, Illinois Department

of Public Health (IDPH), the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) and the Governor's Office. Lake Land College will provide updates as relevant information becomes available.

Lake Land College District 517, located in Mattoon, Illinois, serves the second largest community college district in the state, with a total population of 189,869. The Lake Land College district comprises all or part of 15 counties and 31 public school districts in rural east central Illinois. Counties served by Lake Land College include: Christian, Clark, Clay, Coles, Crawford, Cumberland, Douglas, Edgar, Effingham, Fayette, Jasper, Macon, Montgomery, Moultrie and Shelby.

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