

Pull-start motors can cause spinal injuries

Question: It seems every summer I injure my back starting my lawn mower.

Could it be the pull start that causes the injuries?

Answer: Pull-start engines are notorious for contributing to my children's college tuition fund. The rapid action of yanking the pull chain while bent over in an awkward position or while standing with one foot on the lawn mower is immediately putting your spine in a precarious situation. This holds true for chain saws and other power tools that require a pull start. Many times it requires repetitive yanking to get the motor started in which case you can damage muscles or joints besides the spine. I can tell summer is in full bloom when the pull-start injuries start to multiply. The best solution is to avoid purchasing a pull-start engine if available. Key start or push-button starts are obviously much less stressful on your body. If you are already stuck with one of these killer machines please be careful and use the best biomechanics to operate these tools. Consider having your spine straight, use your legs and keep your upper body square to the machine. Pull as gently as needed to start your engine. Preparation prior to starting your machine also helps. Make sure your fluids are properly filled and balanced and your starting positions are set properly so you can avoid multiple pulls. Elevating your machine so you have better leverage can help also. Situate your machine so you utilize the least resistance to your body. Should you injure yourself or feel pain after using your pull start, see your chiropractor as soon as possible. The earlier you are checked and re-balanced the quicker your body can heal from any injuries created.

Quote of the week: “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” – Reinhold Niebuhr