

HOW TO HONE A HEALTHY GOLF SWING

Whether you are a seasoned veteran of the fairway or golf novice, a pro or fair-weather weekend warrior, back pain, shoulder pain, or some other golf-induced injury will seriously impair your game at least once during your life. Most golf injuries are the result of one or more of the following:

- repetitive *overuse* of particular muscles
- sudden *overdemand* of underprepared muscles
- poor or high-risk *technique*.

OVERUSE

Unlike many sports, golf involves a specific, consistent, unilateral action. Beginners and experienced golfers alike often suffer from repetitive strain and microtrauma associated with performing the same golf swing, using the same side of the body, innumerable times over the course of a game, tournament or practice. One of the common mistakes we all make is failing to read or choosing to ignore the warning signs that the body has had enough: muscle stiffness, tenderness, pain upon movement or stretch, and so on. If you feel these warning signs, postpone the game for another day.

OVERDEMAND

Speed and power are essential components of the golf swing. Many golf injuries occur because key muscles are asked to perform maximally when they are unprepared to do so. These muscles may be already irritated from repetitive strain, being inadequately warmed-up, or otherwise weak, tight, shortened or fatigued. The result is the same: muscle strains, protective spasms, “locked” spinal joints.

POOR TECHNIQUE

In an attempt to drive the ball farther, many golfers use enormous backswings, trunk rotations and follow-throughs. They do so at their peril. The typical golf swing subjects the lumbar spine to 98% of its maximum rotation, and an incredible 100% of its maximum lateral flexion. X-ray studies have shown the long-term result is significant degenerative changes, predominantly right-sided, in the lumbar spines of most seasoned golfers.

Many golf injuries can be avoided, and your game improved, by observing these rules:

- **Get Loose:** Warm-up properly before playing. This means raise your heart-rate, increase circulation in the major muscle groups, and then gently stretch.
- **Get Fit:** Prepare your body for golf season. Learn the “Super Six” golf stretches and make them part of your life! Develop better abdominal strength.
- **Get Checked:** Ensure the key muscle groups and joints of your spine and pelvis are healthy and functioning optimally. Your chiropractor specializes in assessment and correction of muscle and joint function.
- **Get Trained:** Practice and perfect low-risk golf technique. This is as simple as reducing your backswing and follow-through 25%, minimizing trunk rotation by keeping your hips/shoulders parallel, avoiding lateral bending, especially during follow-through, bending the knees when addressing the ball, and maintaining tight abdominal control during the power portion of the swing.
- **Get Smart:** Listen to your body!

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