



STAYING HEALTHY

Golf Injury Prevention

Many people consider golf a low-level physical activity without much risk for injury. Many injuries can be caused by playing golf, however, including injuries to the ankle, elbow, spine, knee, hip, and wrist.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), more than 131,000 people were treated in hospital emergency rooms, doctors' offices, and clinics for golf-related injuries in 2015.

Types of Golf Injuries

Most golf injuries are the result of overuse. By repeating the same golf swing motion over and over again, significant stress is placed on the same muscles, tendons, and joints. Over time, this can cause injury.

Golfers most often experience hand tenderness or numbness, and may also have shoulder, back, and knee pain. Golfer's elbow and wrist injuries, such as tendinitis or carpal tunnel syndrome, may also occur.

Golfer's Elbow

Medial epicondylitis, or "golfer's elbow," is one of the most common injuries. Golfer's elbow is an inflammation of the tendons that attach your forearm muscles to the inside of the bone at your elbow. The forearm muscles and tendons become damaged from overuse — repeating the same motions again and again. This leads to pain and tenderness on the inside of the elbow.

One of the best ways to avoid elbow problems is to strengthen your forearm muscles and slow your golf swing so that there will be less shock in the arm when the ball is hit.

The following simple exercises can help build up your forearm muscles and help you avoid golfer's elbow. For best results, do these exercises during the off-season as well.

Squeeze a tennis ball. Squeezing an old tennis ball for 5 minutes at a time is a simple, effective exercise that will strengthen your forearm muscles.

Wrist curls. Use a lightweight dumbbell. Lower the weight to the end of your fingers, and then curl the weight back into your palm. Follow this by curling up your wrist to lift the weight an inch or two higher. Perform 10 repetitions with one arm, and then repeat with the other arm.

Reverse wrist curls. Use a lightweight dumbbell. Place your hands in front of you, palm side down. Using your wrist, lift the weight up and down. Hold the arm that you are exercising above your elbow with your other hand in order to limit the motion to your forearm. Perform 10 repetitions with one arm, and then repeat with the other arm.

Low Back Pain

Low back pain is another common complaint among golfers. It is often caused by a poor swing. The rotational stresses of the golf swing can place considerable pressure on the spine and muscles.

Also, poor flexibility and muscle strength can cause minor strains in the back that can easily become severe injuries.

Here are some simple exercises to help strengthen lower back muscles and prevent injuries.

Rowing. Firmly tie the ends of rubber tubing. Place it around an object that is shoulder height (like a door hinge). Standing with your arms straight out in front of you, grasp the tubing and slowly pull it toward your chest. Release slowly. Perform three sets of 10 repetitions, at least three times a week.

Pull downs. With the rubber tubing still around the door hinge, kneel and hold the tubing over your head. Pull down slowly toward your chest, bending your elbows as you lower your arms. Raise the tubing slowly over your head. Perform three sets of 10 repetitions, at least three times a week.

Yoga and Pilates. These exercise programs focus on trunk and abdomen strength, as well as flexibility.

General Injury Prevention

Warm Up

Always warm up before a round of golf. A good warm up prepares your body for more intense activity by getting your blood flowing and raising your muscle temperature. Before you play golf, do some simple stretching exercises, focusing on your shoulders, back, and legs. Then hit a few golf balls on the driving range. It will not only help your game, but will help prevent injury in the long run.

Although a good warm up is essential for all golfers, it is especially important if you have arthritis that is aggravated by playing golf. To help prevent arthritis pain while out on the course, some golfers may benefit from taking a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) such as ibuprofen or naproxen before or after playing. Your doctor can talk with you about whether this is appropriate in your case.

Additional Tips for Preventing Injury

- Protect your skin by using sunscreen. Wear sunglasses to filter out UVA and UVB rays, and wear a hat with a visor to shade your eyes and face.
- Avoid a lightning strike by seeking shelter at the first sign of a thunderstorm. If possible, head for a large, permanent building or fully enclosed metal vehicle, such as a car or van, when storms approach. Always avoid large, open areas, small rain and sun shelters, and tall objects such as trees and poles.
- Make sure you are well hydrated before, during, and after your game. Replace your fluids, whether you feel thirsty or not.
- When riding in a golf cart, keep your feet inside the cart. Players have broken ankles when their feet have gotten caught under moving golf carts.
- Always be aware of your environment and other players on the course. It is possible to sustain a soft-tissue injury by being hit by a golf ball.

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