



GOLF INJURY PREVENTION AND CARE

Golf is a challenging game that is suitable for all ages and activity levels and a great option for outdoor activity. Additionally, with the increase in indoor facilities, golf skills can be practiced even in subpar weather conditions.

When learning to golf, it is helpful to work with a seasoned golf instructor to learn proper technique and to be fitted for appropriate clubs to help avoid injury. It is recommended to consistently practice fundamental skills such as driving, chipping and putting.

Injury Prevention

Annual pre-participation physical exams performed by sports medicine professionals can help to identify areas of concern such as poor trunk flexibility inadequate strength, and/or flaws in mechanics. Address all areas of concern with your doctor, certified athletic trainer, physical therapist or other medical professional before beginning training.

To prevent musculoskeletal injuries common in golf, a thorough warm up of at least 10 minutes should be performed including movement and stretching. Start with walking or jogging to increase overall body temperature and blood flow to the muscles. Next, loosen neck, shoulders, trunk, hips and ankles by swinging or rotating in large, controlled movements. Stretch any areas that are particularly stiff for 30-60 seconds. Next, take full swings of the club without ball contact starting at slow velocity and increasing to game speed. Now you are ready to tee up on the driving range!

Overuse injury can be avoided by playing with proper technique, limiting playing time to allow the body to recover, and avoiding playing while fatigued.

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Common Injuries

Symptoms to watch for include pain during activity, ache during rest, stiffness, swelling, discoloration, loss of motion, or favoring the sore area.

Back pain due to rotational stresses, bent over posture and repetitive motions make for a tough day on the course. Muscle strain occurs to the group of muscles that support the spine and to those stretching across the mid or low back. Symptoms include pain in the soft tissue of the low or mid back with stiffness and/or decreased range of motion especially when first waking or when rotating the body. If mild, treatment can include a lengthened warm up with targeted stretching, shorten the period of play, stretch again and apply ice for 20 minutes. For pain that does not improve with warm up movements, is intense, keeps you up at night, is centered on the spine, or sends shooting pain, numbness or tingling down your leg, stop play and seek medical evaluation.

Hand, wrist and elbow pain may arise and can often be attributed to improper grip or poor swing technique. If wrist or hand pain occurs, first ensure to take adequate warm up and relax your grip. Golfer's elbow or medial epicondylitis is attributed to repetitive stress of gripping, rotating and swinging on the pinky side of the elbow. Pain and swelling associated with this injury may only be present during and after play or may linger in more severe cases. Initial treatment includes rest from golf and any other activities stressing the area such as ball throwing and using a screwdriver. Ice for up to 20 minutes to decrease pain and swelling. When returning to play, remember to take time to warm up properly and consider adjusting your grip to reduce stress.

Shoulder pain caused by injury to the rotator cuff muscles that support the position of the shoulder can occur in golf due to repetitive motion of a poor swing or a single swing with ground contact. Rotator cuff tendonitis involves injury to the tendons connecting the muscles to the bone. With both injuries, pain may be minimal during play but the golfer may experience decreased motion and/or swing speed. Adequate warm up and commitment to proper swing technique can reduce injury to the shoulder. Have

your swing analyzed by a golf professional or a sports medicine professional with experience in golf related injury prevention. The problem may lie in the hip or back which will lead to increased stress in the shoulder.

Injury Treatment

For minor injuries not requiring immediate medical attention, stop participation and rest. Ice the injured area for no longer than 20 minutes and repeat as often as every 2 hours. Compress swelling using an elastic wrap; taking care as not to decrease circulation by applying too tightly. Elevate injuries to the extremities to decrease swelling.

If symptoms persist, and for any injury involving pain, swelling, dysfunction, loss of sensation, uncontrolled bleeding or concussion related symptoms should be seen by a trained sports medicine professional for evaluation and care. Treatment of injury will often involve physical therapy to address areas of weakness or poor motion based on your injury evaluation and should include analysis of your golf swing. Following an injury, return to sport activity only when clearance is granted by a health care professional.

Expert Consultants

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Resources

www.sportsmed.org
www.uskidsgolf.com
www.thefirsttee.org

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TIPS FOR SAFETY ON THE COURSE

Be Aware of Your Surroundings

Always stay clear of any golfer preparing to swing. Listen for someone yelling 'Fore' indicating a ball that may be traveling toward you.

Pay Attention to Weather Conditions

On hot or humid days, increase water intake, take breaks and decrease total time on the course.

If storms are in the area, stay off of the course. Speak to the staff at your particular course for information regarding alert systems and safe areas to seek shelter during a storm.

Be Sun Smart

Wear a sweat resistant SPF 30 or higher sunscreen while on the course and reapply every 2 hours or at the turn. Wear a hat and sunglasses to protect your face and eyes. If you are particularly sensitive to the sun, play early or late in the day and wear long-sleeved polo and pants.

Hydrate

Drink water before playing a round or practicing. Bring a water bottle with you to ensure you remain hydrated during your time on the course.

While golf injury rates are low compared to many other sports, it is important to learn how to prevent, recognize, and care for golf related injuries.