

## **GOLF INJURY PREVENTION: KEEPING YOUR BODY HEALTHY**

There are over 30 million golfers in North America, and the popularity of the sport has skyrocketed in recent years. As you may have read in many recent golf publications, several PGA Tour players (David Duval, Tiger Woods, Fred Couples and Raymond Floyd) are citing chiropractic and fitness training programs as a primary reason for their improved play and decreased incidence of injury. Dr. Tom La Fountain is a chiropractor who travels with the PGA tour and regularly provides chiropractic to the pros. Dr. La Fountain reports that up to 85 percent of the injuries on the PGA Tour and Senior Tour relate to the spine, and about 70 to 75 percent of those golfers receive regular chiropractic care.

As a 7 year CFL veteran, I know all too well the frustration one faces when suffering from a sports injury. As an avid golfer, I have experienced how we contort our bodies into oddly twisted postures 120 times over three or four hours, coupled with the fatigue from several miles of walking. As a Doctor of Chiropractic, I treat golfers with injuries that result from improper instruction and poor physical conditioning which can be a recipe for potential chronic lower-back trouble.

The symptom of back pain is a warning sign that there is an underlying problem that will likely get worse.&nbsp; Unfortunately, most golfers continue with poor form and technique until they get injured, before they look for help. Doctors of chiropractic look for the cause of the symptom and help reduce the likelihood of future injury. Back in the mid-1980's Raymond Floyd and Payne Stewart were some of the first golfers to go to their chiropractor and the fitness trailer for stretching and light weight work.&nbsp; Since then, working out and chiropractic care have become mandatory among the best players.&nbsp;

The golf swing subjects the lower back to rapid, complex and intense loading patterns. The low back must contend with significant lateral bending, shear, compression, and torsional forces. For example, the golf swing generates a peak compression load of more than eight times the body weight in both amateurs and professionals, where as running and rowing only generate four to seven times body weight, respectively.&nbsp; It is not surprising that 62% of golfers will incur an injury directly related to the sport.

Proper joint mobility allows the golfer to have a complete, full turn for his/her back swing and permits his/her hip to clear toward the target producing power and accuracy. The more flexibility and strength a person

can develop the longer that golfer will hit the ball; For amateurs and week-end golfers, proper warm-up and stretching exercises are paramount because with intermittent activity. Flexibility is something that the body loses quickly. Flexibility can be regained with time and proper instruction, but most golf publications show many stretching exercises that may be very wrong for you. In fact they may cause injury to your back and neck. That is why you need to be evaluated by a professional that knows tissue specific rehabilitation and how it relates to golf.

In the mean time, I recommend these simple measures to help you avoid back pain or injury and improve your game:

Purchase equipment that fits.; Don't try to adapt your swing to the wrong clubs;; A six-footer playing with irons designed for someone five inches shorter is begging for back trouble.

Take lessons from a Pro. Learning proper swing technique is critical. At the end of the swing, you want to be standing up straight; the back should NOT be twisted.

For senior golfers. If you show some signs of arthritis in the hands, consider a larger, more specialized grip for added safety and performance.

Warm up before each round. Stretching before and after 18 holes is the best way to reduce post-game stiffness and soreness. Take a brisk walk to get blood flowing to the muscles; then do a set of stretches.&nbsp; To set up a stretching and/or exercise routine, see a doctor of chiropractic or gold pro who can evaluate your areas of tension and flexibility.

Keep your entire body involved. Every third hole, take a few practice swings with the opposite hand to keep your muscles balanced and even out stress on the back.

Drink lots of water. Dehydration causes early fatigue, leading you to compensate by adjusting your swing, thus increasing the risk of injury. Don't smoke or drink alcoholic beverages while golfing, as both cause loss of fluid.

Take the One bad swing -- striking a root or a rock with your club -- can damage a wrist. If unsure whether you can get a clean swing, take the drop.

Nutritional factors should not be ignored when looking at ways to prevent golf injuries. Golfers commonly self-medicate with aspirin and NSAIDs to help deal with inflammation and pain. These medications are known to cause gastrointestinal ulceration and reduce connective tissue healing. It would be wise for you to adopt a diet that is rich in dark green and other

colorful vegetables and cold water fish, which are known to be sources of anti-inflammatory omega-3 fatty acids, bioflavonoids and other phytochemicals. Supplementation with omega-3 fatty acids, flavonoids, ginger, turmeric, Boswellia and bromelain can add additional anti-inflammatory support, while supplemental glucosamine and chondroitin sulfate are useful for enhancing the repair of connective tissues.

Wear orthotics. These custom-made shoe inserts support the arch, absorb shock, and increase coordination.&nbsp; Studies show custom-made, flexible orthotics can improve the entire body's balance, stability, and coordination, which translates into a smoother swing and reduced fatigue. While the upper part of a shoe may score style points, what the foot rests on affects your game.

Avoid metal spikes. They tear up greens and can increase stress on the back. Soft shoes or soft spikes allow for greater motion.

Visit a Sports Minded Chiropractor. Doctors of chiropractic are trained and licensed to treat the entire neuromusculoskeletal system. Some doctors of chiropractic have special interest in sports medicine and can provide advice for golfers to help them decrease the stresses and strains placed on their bodies.; Doctors of chiropractic can address other health concerns, such as shoulder, knee, arm, and wrist pain that could affect your game. If you golf consistently, you will no doubt feel the stress of the game, but by following a few simple prevention tips, it is possible to play without pain for a lifetime.

Dr. Sean Graham is a doctor of chiropractic with a special interest in sports injury prevention and rehabilitation. He is a seven year CFL veteran and Co-Director of Satori Integrative Health Centre. He can be contacted at 604 274 7224 or [sgraham88@aol.com](mailto:sgraham88@aol.com)