

Prevention of Golf-Related Injuries

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Golf is a game now enjoyed by over 25 million golfers of all ages, shapes, and levels of physical fitness. Although most people would agree that golf is not a rigorous sport, there is a wide range of musculoskeletal ailments associated with the full golf swing. Contrary to the slow nature of the game, the explosive action of the full swing places significant stress on shoulder, elbow, and wrist joints as well as producing high torque forces on the low back and hip structures.

Golfers of all levels could benefit from an effective golf-training program that serves a dual purpose of improving performance and reducing the risk for injury.



Golfers have learned that it is much easier to make a mechanically correct swing when the body is strong and flexible. Performance improvement fitness should include three major components that include increasing flexibility, increasing golf specific strength, and improving postural balance. For

example, increasing joint flexibility can lengthen your swing; thus increasing club head speed and resulting in longer shots. Increasing golf specific muscle strength requires an integrated, multi-joint strengthening program to allow for coordinated actions of major muscle groups of different body segments. The golf swing inherently creates postural imbalances, which can lead to injury. It is important to insure a conditioning program strives for front-to-back and left-to-right balance to reduce risk of injury.

To reduce the risk of injury one must have adequate flexibility and strength in several key body segments, most notably the shoulders, elbows, and trunk. The repetitive nature of the golf swing coupled with the high velocity forces generated combine to cause injuries that occur in unique and predictable ways. One common injury is medial epicondylitis, or “golfer’s elbow”. This ailment involves increased inflammation and pain on the inside of the right elbow (for right-handed golfers). A

proper conditioning program will include wrist flexion/extension and supination/pronation (rotation of wrist clockwise and counter-clockwise) strengthening and stretching can reduce the incidence of injury. Another common injury is shoulder tendonitis, or “rotator cuff tendonitis”, which can be a chronic problem for those with tight shoulder internal/external rotators and weak shoulder girdle stabilizers. Finally, the chronic ailment of “low back pain” afflicts most golfers at one time or another. The golf swing combines “unnatural” spinal movements of bending forward, bending backward, bending sideways, and rotating. A preventative-conditioning program will incorporate multi-

directional stretching and strengthening 2-3 times a week with an 8-minute warm-up routine before playing. For example, a before round warm-up exercise routine would include knee to chest, modified squats, back extensions, shoulder stretch, and low back/neck rotations and sidebands. All exercises would be done in sets of five performed in a smooth, controlled manner.

This has been a brief overview of the importance of golf-specific conditioning in the prevention of repetitive stress golf injuries. If you should have questions concerning screening examination or treatment of golf-related injuries feel free to contact our office and speak to a physical therapist.