

HEALTH REPORT

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INJURIES ON THE GOLF COURSE REDUCED WITH EXERCISE AND STRETCHING

People who are involved in sports and recreational activities experience numerous injuries in the pursuit of enjoyment. One would think that the physical contact sports would be the ones producing most of these problems and a competitor would remain relatively uninjured in the more individual sports that involve no contact or collision with another person. This, however, is far from the truth especially when considering the more passive sport of golf.

In the United States alone, it is estimated that approximately 27 million people play the game of golf. It is actually quite shocking to look at the number of injuries occurring in the pursuit of this activity. In the United States, there are 13.5 million golf-related injuries reported each year.

Patients who come to chiropractors seeking relief from bodily aches and pains will quite often be suffering from some variety of repetitive strain syndrome. These patients are out on the golf course taking swings at a ball in such a way as to put undo and often extreme strain on muscles, tendons, ligaments, joints and bones. They swing repeatedly over the course of a round of golf that often involves playing 18 holes laid out over a 4 mile track that might involve 40, 50 or more severe rips at the ball.

There are several basic reasons a person causes injury to themselves, and patient education can go a long way toward preventing bodily damage from occurring. Very simply, the average patient does very little, if anything, to prepare or condition their body for the golf swing. Basically, they just play. This will often involve showing up at the course just minutes before their game is scheduled to begin. They walk out onto the first tee (location where the initial shot is struck on each hole) and "give it a go." Generally, they embark upon this action with little or no stretching to get loose or get the body warmed up to play. Commencing to swing viciously at the ball is just as common for persons who visit the practice range to work on their game by bashing a hundred or more balls. No stretching, no warm-up, no preparation of the body or conditioning of the body for the rigors of the game.

When the forces that are involved in creating a full, hard golf swing are looked at further, it is easy to see how injuries, especially those caused by repeated strain, can occur. The average golfer can actually achieve a swing speed of about 90 miles per hour with a golf club. Professionals are only a bit superior at 115, but the 90 mile per hour swing is enough to require a major effort. It is surprising just how much work is required to swing the club. "Amateur golfers achieve approximately 90 percent of their peak muscular activity when driving a golf ball. This is the same intensity as picking up a weight that can only be lifted 4 times before total fatigue." This statistic comes from the book *The Biomechanics of Golf* by Paul Chek.

So, what can golfers learn to do before playing a round of golf to help in injury prevention? The basic recipe for success involves developing a simple set of exercises to warm up and stretch the body before play. It may also be important to do some additional stretching during the round as golf these days can involve long delays caused by slow play or looking for errant balls. Additionally, golfers would be wise to have their bodies checked by a chiropractor to help eliminate source points of injuries which could stem from pre-existing postural instability or poor flexibility.

The key to solving the problem of many of the 13.5 million injuries would at least three-fold. One, visit a chiropractor to make sure the body is in good postural condition for the rigors of the game. Next, exercise regularly with an emphasis on stretching and flexibility while off the course or between rounds. Finally, make sure the body is completely warmed up before play or practice. Don't just "grip it and rip it." Arrive early, warm up and only then go out on a beautiful golf course and enjoy a pleasant day that is free of injury.