

SPORTS TRAINING TIPS: GOLF

U W H E A L T H S P O R T S M E D I C I N E

GOLF INJURIES

According to the National Golf Foundation there are over 26 million golfers in the United States and an estimated 50–60 million golfers worldwide. The average golfer plays approximately 37 rounds per year and spends many more days practicing. Although considered a low-impact and low-risk sport, golf has an alarming rate of injury. One recent study showed that during a two-year period, 60 percent of golf professionals and 40 percent of amateurs sustained either a traumatic or overuse injury while golfing. Over 80 percent of the reported injuries were related to overuse (*Gosheger Am J Sports Med 2003*).

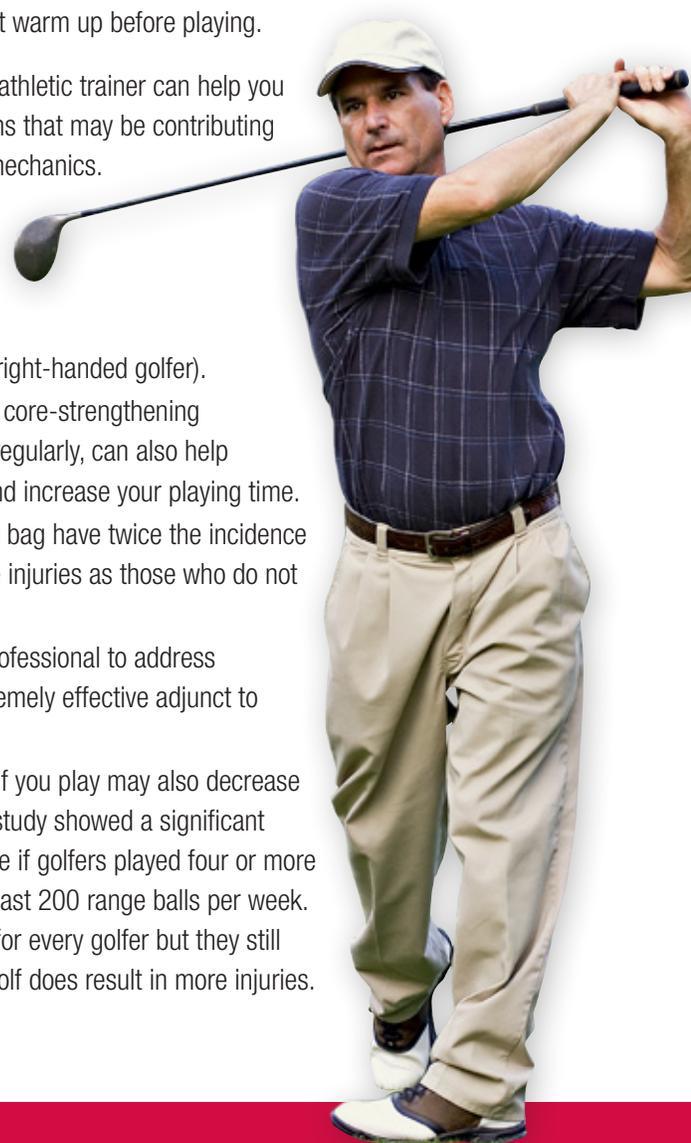
What are the most common injuries in golf?

Golfers most frequently report injuries to the low back, shoulder, and elbow. Injury patterns differ between elite and recreational golfers. Professional and elite golfers tend to experience golf injury related to overuse while amateur golfers may experience injury related to poor swing technique *and* overuse.

How can golf injuries be prevented?

Warming up before golfing has been shown to decrease the incidence of golf injuries. One survey showed that over 80 percent of golfers spend less than 10 minutes warming up before a round. Those *who did* warm up had less than half the incidence of injuries of those who did not warm up before playing.

- A physical therapist and/or athletic trainer can help you recognize physical limitations that may be contributing to an injury or poor swing mechanics.
- It has been found that the incidence of low back pain decreases by improving a golfer's lead hip rotation range of motion (left hip in right-handed golfer).
- A rotator cuff, scapular and core-strengthening program, when performed regularly, can also help decrease your injury rate and increase your playing time.
- Golfers who carry their own bag have twice the incidence of back, shoulder and ankle injuries as those who do not carry their bag.
- Instruction by a teaching professional to address swing faults can be an extremely effective adjunct to a rehabilitation program.
- Reducing the amount of golf you play may also decrease your chance of injury. One study showed a significant increase in injury prevalence if golfers played four or more rounds per week or hit at least 200 range balls per week. These numbers may differ for every golfer but they still emphasize that too much golf does result in more injuries.



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Golf Posture – Are you setting up for success or physical limitation and injury?

Typical golf set-up postures can be broken down to three types: Neutral posture (N), C-shaped posture and S-shaped posture. Neutral posture is desired, as the other two have greater potential to create swing flaws and physical stress to the body.

Neutral (N) Posture



The Neutral Posture is the desired alignment as shown at left. The majority of the golfer's back touches the red line. He avoids excessive rounding of his upper back and arching of his lower back. Neutral Posture prevents excessive stress on the structures of the lower back and allows for proper shoulder turn in the upper body.

C Posture



The C Posture occurs when the shoulders are slumped forward at address and there is a definitive roundness of the back from the tailbone to the back of the neck as shown at left. The majority of C Postures are caused by a series of muscle imbalances and joint restrictions that develop over many years. The most significant limitation is the

lack of backward bend of the upper back. This leads to a severe loss of spinal rotation, which in turn limits the ability to create a good turn on the takeaway. Without this rotation, golfers will often compensate in other ways which may lead to injury. Thirty-three percent of amateurs set up with a C Posture.

Physical Causes of C Posture

- Tight pectoralis major and minor (chest) muscles
- Tight upper trapezius (neck) muscle
- Tight latissimus dorsi muscle
- Weak scapular muscles
- Weak deep neck flexor muscles

S Posture



The S Posture occurs when the player creates too much arch in his lower back by sticking out the tailbone too much as shown at left. This excessive curvature of the lower back puts abnormally high stress on the spine and deactivates the core muscles. This posture will ultimately lead to the lower body

being out of position on the downswing and will affect the swing's sequence of motion. It may also lead to lower back, hip or knee pain and injury. Twenty-five percent of amateurs set up with an S Posture.

Physical Causes of S Posture

- Tight hip flexor muscles
- Tight lower back
- Weak gluteal (hip) muscles
- Weak abdominal (core) muscles

The UW Health Golfers Clinic is staffed by physical therapists and athletic trainers who have been trained and certified by the Titleist Performance Institute. To schedule an appointment in this clinic call (608) 265-7500.

References

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For more information about sports rehabilitation services, please visit uwhealth.org/sportsrehab or call (608) 263-4765.