



GOLF INJURIES

Golf looks like an easy game to play, hitting a stationary object with a club into a relatively wide open space. Well, think again! To become a good golfer, it is recommended that you start young and practice, practice, and practice. Golf historically is perceived as being a low-risk sport when it comes to injuries. However, many young golfers, especially those who lack proper technique, suffer from acute or overuse injuries.



WHAT TYPES OF INJURIES ARE MOST COMMON IN GOLF?

Acute injuries are usually the result of a single, traumatic episode, such as hitting the ground of a submerged tree root in a sand trap. Overuse injuries are more subtle and usually occur over time. These injuries will more often stem from the stress that the golfer puts on the back and shoulders when swinging. The three most commonly injured areas of the body are the back, shoulder, and elbow. They should be treated with rest, a good stretching/warm-up program, and good, sound advice from a golf professional.

GOLF

THE FUTURE OF KIDS GOLF

Approximately 44 percent of all reported golf injuries in youth are from overuse. The main causes of these injuries include:

- Lack of flexibility
- Poor conditioning
- Excessive play or practice
- Poor swing mechanics
- Ground impact forces
- Intermittent play

Poor flexibility is a key risk factor for a golf injury. One survey showed that more than 80 percent of golfers spent 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. The golf swing is broken down into four phases: backswing, downswing, acceleration/ball strike, and follow through. Any limitations in range of motion (ROM) will hamper the golfer's ability to achieve the proper swing plane, thus increasing the stress on the involved joints and muscles.

The second main reason for golf injuries is the repetitive nature of this sport. The golf swing involves repetitive, high-velocity movement of the neck, shoulders, spine, elbow, wrist, hips, knees, and ankles. The percentage of injuries directly correlates with the number of rounds or the number of range/practice balls struck per week.

INJURY PREVENTION

To avoid golf injuries at any age level, it is important for the golfer to develop a solid swing technique. The golfer who plays with a poor swing technique will have an increased risk of injury due to the excessive stress placed on their back, shoulders, and elbows. All golfers, no matter the age level, should have a specific routine of stretching/flexibility exercises they perform prior to starting each round. Along with their stretching/flexibility exercises, they should always hit some golf balls before a game, starting with the wedge and gradually working their way up to the driver. You should never just grab the driver and go!

Seek the advice of a sports medicine specialist in your area if any injury occurs to get an accurate diagnosis and prevent recurrent problems. You should return to the course or range only when clearance is granted by a health care professional.

According to the National Golf Foundation's most recent participation report, the number of golfers age 6-17 dropped 24 percent, to 2.9 million from 3.8 million, between 2005 and 2008. The reason cited is the intimidating design of today's golf courses. Kids need to start on family-friendly facilities where they can be provided with some good old-fashioned training and teaching.

According to the foundation, the future of golf can be summed up in two words: fun and play. Their research indicates that when golf is no longer fun for the kids, they will lose interest. According to studies from Positive Coaching Alliance, parents and coaches tend to become too technical too early with kids, and one of the drawbacks of golf is that it's a highly technical sport. Kids should be encouraged to play and have fun for their improvement, even if their shots don't go exactly where they want them to go.

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