



**What You**  
**Should Know**  
**About Golf**  
**Fitness**

# **Chapter 1: Why is golf fitness important?**

As the popularity of golf continues to increase, so to does the desire to exceed in performance in the game; thus many players are beginning to take their golf fitness very seriously.

The main goal of golf fitness is to improve a player's performance by optimizing their physical fitness. This is done through a combination of exercise and nutrition.

Golf fitness provides individuals with the ability to increase muscle strength and flexibility and to increase their balance to ultimately perform a better game. Some of the benefits of participating in golf fitness activities include:

- Increases in movement ability.
- Increase in head speed of a club.
- Increased power of a stroke
- Increased distance of a shot.
- Increased accuracy of a shot.
- Decreased occurrence of back pain.
- Improved blood circulation.

- Decreases chances of muscles becoming sore.

Any of the aforementioned improvements are greatly desired by anyone wishing to excel on the golf course. If a better game is your goal, golf fitness is a must to ensure you are able to play to the best of your ability.

Optimal flexibility is a key aspect in playing a good game of golf. Often, players are limited in their abilities due to tight muscles. Not only does this decrease the effectiveness of a golf swing, it will also increase chances of injury occurring whilst playing. Enhancing flexibility will result in lengthening and increasing the speed of a player's swing. Flexibility is the first aspect of a player's game that should be conditioned.

Golf fitness will also aid in increasing muscle for a player. Whilst it was previously believed by some that an increase in muscle would limit a player's ability by restricting movement, this is not the case. Increasing muscle will ultimately aid in increasing flexibility and club head speed. Strengthening muscle will also aid in eliminating weakness of the back: A condition that plagues many golf players and consequently limits their performance in the game.

Golf can be a long and physically demanding game. Ensuring a player achieves and optimal level of fitness will assure that they are capable of completing the game and maintaining focus throughout.

# **Chapter 2: How can I** **improve my golf** **fitness?**

Increasing the fitness level of a goal player in order to optimize performance is achieved through a combination of specific exercise and nutrition therapy.

To ensure optimal levels of fitness are achieved, the golfer must perform specific exercises that are designed to increase flexibility, strengthen muscle and optimize balance.

Players must be dedicated to adopting an exercise regimen that involves exercises and stretches before each round of golf, on the green and exercise and stretches implement during training or the off season.

If you are devising a golf fitness program for yourself, be sure to allow time between rounds of golf and at least half an hour before a game in which to implement the exercises in your training regimen.

The adoption of stretches and exercise is highly recommended in conjunction with diet. An improvement in diet will aid in increasing strength and concentration; this

will ensure that the player is capable of lasting the full length of the game and performing to the best of their ability.

# **Chapter 3: Common** **golfing injuries.**

There are several injuries that commonly occur in those who play golf:

- 1) **Back pain/injury:** The motion of the swing itself combined with the stance of many golf players will result in back pain or injury in more than half of all golfers.
- 2) **Golfers elbow:** Golfers elbow is characterized by soreness and inflammation on the inside of the upper arm (near the elbow). This can usually be prevented by increasing the muscle strength and flexibility in this area.
- 3) **Tennis Elbow:** This is very similar to golfers elbow however the soreness and inflammation is situated on the outside of the arms as opposed to the inside of the arm.
- 4) **Carpal Tunnel syndrome:** Carpal tunnel syndrome is a form of repetitive stress disorder that occurs in the hands. The positioning of hands on a club ultimately results in stress on the hands, creating pain in the nerves of the hands. Increasing muscles strength

can prevent this condition from occurring.

- 5) **Shoulder pain:** Pain in the joint of the shoulder is generally caused via the motion of the swing. Increasing flexibility of muscles around the shoulder will aid in easing the severity or in preventing muscle pain from occurring.
- 6) **Knee pain/injury:** The positioning of the player combined with the motion of following through with a swing may often cause tearing to muscles around the knee or kneecap pain. Increasing muscle strength and flexibility will significantly decrease the occurrence of knee pain or injury.
- 7) **Trigger finger:** The condition is characterized by a locking up of the fingers due to grip on the club. This is due to inhibition of the tendons of the fingers. Some of the hand strengthening activities mentioned in chapter six will aid in preventing trigger finger from occurring.
- 8) **Wrist injury/pain:** Wrist injury or pain can be caused by a variety of things. The tendons of the wrist may become inflamed, causing pain, or the bones of the wrist may continually collide with one another due to the repetitive movement of the swing. Wrist pain may

also occur due to tendon subluxation. This condition is characterized by the sheath that holds tendons beginning to slide in and out of its groove. There are existing exercises that target the wrists to prevent such injuries from occurring.

- 9) **Fracture of the Hamate Bone:** The hamate bone is situated on the outside of the wrist and juts into the palm of the hand. Many golfers hold a club in such a way as to allow it to rub up against this part of the hamate bone; in some cases this may cause the bone to fracture.

The most effective means of preventing injuries from occurring, or to minimize their severity is to follow an appropriate golf fitness regimen.

# **Chapter 4: Stretches** **for before the game.**

Devising an appropriate series of stretches to perform before a round of golf will aid in increasing your performance as well as preventing the occurrence of injury. The following stretches are appropriate for implementation before a game. It is best to try each stretch before deciding which ones you will use for your golf fitness regimen. Be sure to select stretches that will address various parts of the body, from feet and ankles up to the neck and shoulders.

## **1) Neck stretches:**

*Neck Rotation:* Turn your head to one side and hold it. Now turn it to the other side and hold it once more.

*Neck Flexion:* Hang your head, push your chin in towards your neck and hold for a moment.

*Neck stretch:* Cock your head to one side and hold it. Repeat this for the other side.

*Neck and Pectoral Stretch:* Begin by pulling your shoulder blades back and

downwards. Hold them here whilst you proceed to rotate your head to one side. Hold your head here for twenty seconds before rotating it to the opposite side and holding for twenty seconds.

## **2) Shoulders, Back and Chest stretches:**

Ensuring you warm up the back will aid you in reducing the risk of injury and in developing a powerful and consistent swing.

*Behind the shoulders:* Grab your right elbow behind your body using your left hand, pulling in as far as you can. Repeat this for the right side.

*Front shoulder and Chest:* Hold your hands together behind your back and stick out your chest whilst raising your arms away from your body.

*Lateral back stretch:* Hold your club over your head in both hands. Bend towards one side and hold (remember to bend at the pelvis). Return to your standing position and bend in the opposite direction.

*Back rotation:* Keep your hips facing forwards whilst you rotate the upper half of your body to one side. Repeat this for the other side.

*Lower Back Stretch:* Sit upright with legs slightly apart. As you exhale, stretch your upper body up and proceed to lower your upper body towards your legs by

bending at the hips. Hold this position for twenty seconds before relaxing.

*Side stretch:* Stand with feet shoulder width apart, holding a club above your head. Bend your knees and proceed to stretch to one side. Return to your starting position and repeat, this time stretching towards the opposite side.

*Bending Stretch:* Hold golf club approximately three feet in front of your body (with the club head on the ground); proceed to walk your feet backwards until your body is at a ninety degree angle to your legs. Hold this position for twenty seconds. This stretch will also aid in stretching the hamstrings.

*Eagle arms:* Raise your arms up towards the sky, bending them at the elbows bring your hands together behind your head. Feel the stretch in your upper back and shoulders. Hold this position for twenty seconds.

### **3) Arms and Wrists Stretches:**

Hold your arm straight out in front of you. Take the opposite hand and bend down the wrist of your extended hand. Now repeat this, but this time stretch the extended hand upwards. Repeat for the other side. This exercise will loosen the wrist and will aid in preventing golfers or tennis elbow from occurring.

- 4) **Abdominal Stretches:** Warming up your abdominal muscles is as simple as tensing the abdominal area and holding for twenty seconds. Relax and repeat this one more time.

5) **Leg stretches:**

*Toe touch:* Standing with your feet shoulder width apart, proceed to bend forward and try to touch your toes. Remember to bend at the waist and only go as far as you are comfortable with.

*Quads Stretch:* Stand upright, raise your ankle in front and grab a hold of it, pulling it up towards you as though trying to look at the bottom of your shoe. Repeat this for the other leg.

*Hamstring stretch:* Stand upright with your foot on a raised object (such as a bench or golf cart) and bend forward at the waist. Remember to repeat this for the other leg.

*Seated Hamstring stretch:* Whilst seated, arch your lower back slightly and slowly attempt to straighten one leg (remember to keep the lower back arched). Once your leg has stretched as far as it is able to, hold the position for ten seconds before relaxing and repeating once more. Proceed to repeat the exercise for the opposite leg.

*Calf stretch:* Stand with feet apart, one about a 40 centimeters in front of the other. Lean forward (keeping the back heel firmly on the ground) and flex the front knee. Repeat this for the other side.

*Hamstring and Abdominal stretch:* Stand with your legs shoulder width apart and proceed to step forward with one foot, so that this foot is approximately four feet in front of the other. Turn the back foot inwards and push the leading hip back, allowing your hips to face forward. Hold this pose for twenty to thirty seconds before returning to the standing position and repeating for the opposite side.

*Hip Stretch:*

- a) Raise one leg by placing it on the golf cart or a bench and proceed to raise yourself up onto the toes of the foot that remains on the ground. Tense your gluteal muscle and push the right hip towards the cart. Hold this position for twenty seconds before relaxing and repeating for the opposite side.
  
- b) Standing straight, proceed to lift one foot and rest it on the opposite knee. Now, place your hand on the knee of the lifted leg and begin to push it away until you feel the stretch in your hips and gluteal muscle. Hold this position for twenty

seconds; then repeat for the opposite side.

Warming up exercise should be performed before and after each round of golf, and if time permits should be performed during a round of golf to ensure muscles do not become rigid and remain in prime condition throughout the game.

# **Chapter 5: Stretches** **to increase flexibility.**

Increasing flexibility will allow for a more efficient stroke, allowing for maximum travel distance for the ball. It will also serve to prevent injuries and back pain from occurring during play and will prevent muscles from becoming sore.

## **Stretching the back:**

- a) Lie on your side with both knees together and bent at a ninety degree angle. Extend your arms out with your hands clasped together; raise the upper arm off the arm that is closest to the floor; continue to move the arm, whilst rotating your body. Your arm should come to rest on the floor on the opposite side. Hold this position for twenty to thirty seconds then return to the starting position. Repeat this for the opposite side. Repeat the exercise five times.
  
- b) *Stretching the lower back:* Lie on your back with one knee bent; your foot firmly on the ground. Hold on

to this knee, pulling it towards your chest. Hold this position for twenty seconds then relax. Repeat this five times before proceeding to do the same with the other leg. This exercise can be done raising both knees at the same time. If you choose this option be sure to grasp behind the thighs opposed to grasping the knee itself.

- c) *Stretching the upper back:* Kneel on all fours with your palms firmly on the ground. Extend your arms out, pressing them down on the floor to create an arch shape with your back. Hold his position for tent seconds before relaxing and repeating one more time.

### **Stretching the shoulders:**

- a) Holding a golf club with the head on the ground, Place feet shoulder width apart and proceed to bend over until your body is at a ninety degree angle to your legs. Position yourself so that your arms are stretched out in front of your head, still holding the golf club. Relax the head and neck and hold this position for a moment, before returning to the starting position and repeating five times.
- b) Lie on your back with your knees and ankles together, allow your legs to fall to one side (be sure to keep

your knees together). Use your abdominal muscles to bring the legs back to the starting position. Repeat this motion, allowing your legs to drop to the other side. Repeat ten times for each side.

- c) Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and your knees slightly bent. Take a hold of your left wrist with your right hand and proceed to rotate your upper body in a backswing like movement whilst breathing in. Return to the starting position whilst breathing out. Repeat this exercise five times.

**Stretching the chest:** Standing in a doorway, proceed to extend your arms outwards. Bend your elbow to a ninety degree angle, so that your hands are pointing upwards. Place your hands against the doorframe and lean your body forward. Feel the stretch in your chest; hold this for twenty seconds before relaxing.

**Stretching the hands, wrists and arms:**

- a) Position yourself on your knees with your palms flat on the ground. Press down on the floor whilst pulling the muscles of the arms upwards. Repeat this five times before changing of the positions of your hands to having the palms pressed against the floor. Once again, push down on the floor

whilst pulling the muscles of your arms up.

### **Stretching the legs:**

a) *Hip stretch:*

- i) Sitting against a wall, proceed to pull your legs in towards you (the soles of your feet should be touching each other whilst your knees point outwards). Bring them in as close as possible and hold the position for sixty seconds.
  
- ii) Lying on your back, position yourself so that your feet are placed flat up against a wall with your knees bent at a ninety degree angle. Cross your right leg over the thigh of your left leg. Place your hand on your right thigh and pull it towards you, feeling the stretch on the right hip. Hold this position for tens seconds, before relaxing and repeating once more. Repeat the exercise for the opposite hip.
  
- iii) Stand with your feet shoulder width apart. Bend down on one knee and roll the back foot around so the beginning of the instep rests on the ground. As you breathe out, slowly push the front of the hip of the

back leg towards the ground. Hold the position for ten seconds before relaxing and repeating once more. Repeat the exercise for the opposite leg.

b) *Hamstring stretch:*

- i) Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and raise your arms out in front of your chest, clasping your hands together. Twist your upper body to one side and bend at the waist; stretching your arms towards the ground. Return and repeat the process on the opposite side. Repeat this ten times for each side.
- ii) Lie flat on your back and extend one leg straight up so that it is at a ninety degree angle with your body. Take a hold of the thigh of this leg and pull it gently towards your chest. Feel the stretch in your hamstring and hold this position for twenty seconds before relaxing and repeating the exercise for the opposite leg.
- iii) Sitting upright on the ground, spread your legs apart and bring the heel of one in to

tough the thigh of the opposite leg. Gently press down just above the knee of the bent leg to lower the leg to the ground (or as close to the ground as your body will allow). Now lower your upper body onto the extended leg by bending at the hips. Hold this position for twenty seconds; then repeat for the opposite leg.

- c) *Quadriceps stretch:* Stand straight and lift one leg behind you. Grasping on to your ankle, proceed to pull your foot in towards your body. Hold this position for twenty seconds before relaxing and repeating it for the other leg.
  
- d) *Calf Stretch:* Stand facing a wall, bend one leg forward, and placing your toes on the wall with our heel against the ground. Lean in to the wall, pushing gently on your leg with your hands. Feel the stretch in your calf and hold the position for twenty seconds before returning to your original position and repeating the process for the opposite leg.

Perform these exercises on a regular basis throughout each week. In a matter of weeks you will notice your flexibility and consequently your game improving.

Select the stretches that you are most comfortable with and remember to only stretch to a degree your body is comfortable with.

# **Chapter 6: Exercises** **to increase strength.**

Increasing a player's strength will result in increased head speed of the club, and increased power and distance of a shot. Building up the strengths of muscle will also serve to build muscle endurance for different types of swings. To build up strength it is important to select activities that are similar to the swing itself. The following exercises can be used to build up strength.

## **Backswing strength:**

- a) Stand in your golf picture, holding a dumbbell with your leading hand. Bring your arm across your body in a half backswing like movement, using your muscles to move the weight. Repeat this move twenty times.
  
- b) Holding a medicine ball or weighted object above your head, turn slightly to one side. In a chopping like movement, bring the ball down to the other side of your body, turning your body as you go. Repeat this twenty

times, then switch and perform the exercise for the opposite side of the body.

**Strengthening the back and shoulders:**

- a) *Arm and leg extensions:* This exercise will require you to position yourself on your hands and knees on the ground. Facing the ground, extend your right arm and left leg out at the same time. Hold this position, feeling the stretch. Return to the starting position and repeat the process, this time extending out your left arm and right leg simultaneously. Repeat this exercise twenty times (one set).
  
- b) *Lunges with weights:* Stand upright with your feet shoulder width apart, holding a weighted object directly out in front of you. Take a large step forward with one foot (leaving the other foot firmly planted on the ground); so that your leading leg is at a ninety degree angle, the other leg will remain slightly bent with the foot in the original starting location. Keep holding the weighted object out in front of you, and proceed to twist your upper body around to the side of the leading leg. Return to the starting position and repeat for the opposite leg.

Repeat the exercise ten times for each leg.

- c) *Leg Crossover*: Lying on your back, raise one leg straight up and bend the knee to a ninety degree angle; cross this over the other leg and hold the position for ten seconds. Return to the starting position and repeat for the opposite side. Repeat the activity ten times for each side.
- d) Hold a golf club in your hands (palms facing up) with your arms situated by your sides (the position should be similar to that of lifting weights). Pull outwards on the club for ten seconds (remember to keep a tight hold on it). Relax; then proceed to push inwards on the club.

**Strengthening the hands and wrists:**

- a) Squeeze a tennis ball in each hand for five minutes. This will aid in strengthening the muscles of the forearm.
- b) Hold a dumbbell and allow it to roll to the ends of your finger; curl it back into your palm then curl up your wrist. Repeat this exercise ten times then move on to the opposite hand. Keep holding the dumbbells, placing your hands out in front of you with the palm side facing down. Use your

wrists to lift the dumbbells up and down ten times. Repeat this for the opposite arm.

- c) Holding a golf club by your side, proceed to raise the club by simply cocking your wrist. Raise the club as high as you can. Do this ten times then repeat for the opposite wrist.

**Strengthening the back, abdominals and Deep core stabilizers:** Strengthening the core will improve balance.

Sit upright on the ground with your feet together and knees bent; clasp your hands in front of you. Lean back slightly (until you feel your abdominal muscles tensing) and begin to rotate your upper body to one side. Return to your starting position and rotate around to the other side. Repeat this ten to fifteen times.

When attempting new stretches, remember to do so with extreme caution, as a hasty stretch, or one done incorrectly may result in injury.

# **Chapter 7: Exercises** **to improve posture** **and balance**

Enhancing a player's posture and balance will ultimately increase movement ability and the power and accuracy of each shot. As with strengthening and flexibility exercise, exercises to improve balance should be performed on a regular basis throughout the week.

Exercises aimed at improving posture and balance will require the use of an exercise ball. An exercise ball is reasonably cheap (approximately thirty dollars from most stores) and will be one of the best contributions you can make towards enhancing your golf performance. The exercise ball may also be capable of assisting you in exercises and stretches aimed at increasing strength and flexibility.

**Improving posture:** Position the exercise ball beneath your lower back. Lay yourself down onto the exercise ball; be sure you do not let your neck fall too far back. Hold this position for twenty to thirty seconds, before returning to the starting position and repeating once more.

**Improving balance:** This requires stretches aimed at targeting the core stability muscles (the muscles that control the degree of balance of a player).

- a) Lay with your shoulder blades on the exercise ball and your feet firmly on the ground supporting you. Your knees should be bent at a ninety degree angle. Raise your straight above your body and hold your hands together. Keep your hips straight twist and the upper half of your body to one side. Hold this position for a moment, before returning to the starting position. Repeat the process for the opposite side. Perform this exercise ten times for each side.
- b) (Basic) Place your legs around the exercise ball and squeeze whilst tensing your abdominal muscles. Repeat this exercise ten times.
- c) (Moderate) Place your legs around the exercise ball and tense your abdominal muscles. Lift your legs and ball off the floor until your legs and knees are both bent at ninety degree angles. Hold the position for ten seconds and repeat once more.
- d) (Advanced) Place the legs around the exercise ball and tense the abdominal muscles. Lift the ball off the ground

by raising your legs until the legs and knees are both at ninety degree angles. No place your hands behind your head and proceed to lift the head and sternum upwards to lift the shoulders off the floor. Relax and then repeat the exercise ten times.

# **Chapter 8: Better nutrition for a better game.**

Many people forget that diet plays an important role in their fitness and consequently do not consume appropriate foods. Ensuring you consume an appropriate diet will dramatically enhance your game skills. The following tips will aid you in optimizing your diet for maximum performance on the course.

- 1) **Select the right foods:** Selecting the right types of foods will ensure you are consuming an appropriate amount of all vitamins and minerals. Some tips to aid you in selecting the correct types of foods include:
  - a) Eat plenty of breads and cereals (our diets should be based predominantly on these) as well as fruits and vegetables.
  - b) Consume moderate amounts of lean meat (ensure you remove all visible fat) and dairy (select

skim, trim or reduced fat options).

- c) Limit foods high in fat, such as take-away and deep fried foods.
  - d) Limit foods high in sugar, such as snack foods.
  - e) Choose low fat cooking techniques. Cooking methods such as frying and deep frying will introduce a lot of fat into foods. Try baking, boiling, steaming or roasting, and avoid adding excessive amounts of oil or butter to cooking.
  - f) Choose low fat alternatives to foods you are already eating. There are many low fat alternatives available for a wide range of foods- especially dairy.
- 2) **Eat breakfast:** Breakfast will not only kick start your metabolism, it will ensure you have sufficient energy to begin your game and continue through until the next time you eat. An ideal breakfast would include a bowl of grain cereal, some toast with margarine and a one hundred percent fruit spread or another for of low fat spread and a piece of fruit.

- 3) **Eat whilst you play:** Have snacks throughout the duration of your game. Pieces of fruit or cereal bars are ideal for taking with you on the course to eat. Snacking will aid you in keeping your energy levels up and enhancing your concentration during the game.
- 4) **Drink plenty of water:** Ensure you remain hydrated to maintain your levels of concentration and energy. Be sure to drink water before you even leave the house, and continue to drink at regular intervals. Do not rely on your thirst to tell you when to drink; as you will already be dehydrated by the time you begin to feel thirsty.

By ensuring you are eating the correct amounts and types of food, you will also ensure that you remain at the correct weight (or lose weight if necessary). This will aid in enhancing your performance and physical fitness.

# **Chapter 9: Aerobic conditioning for enhanced endurance.**

Whilst golf is not the most physically demanding of sports, the length and requirements of a single game will leave most players feeling extremely fatigued if they have not achieved a sufficient level of fitness.

Providing yourself with some form of cardiovascular exercise will aid you by enhancing endurance and thus performance during a game. Ensuring that you are physically fit will also increase the speed of recovery after a game.

Developing a cardio fitness regimen for golf will involve looking at the intensity of various cardio exercises. A less intensive activity, such as walking, is unlikely to have a significant impact on fitness as it does not do much to raise the heartbeat. Other exercises, such as running, jogging or power walking will have a more significant effect on heartbeat, thus will provide a more suitable level of conditioning.

To determine the intensity of exercise that is suitable for your needs, subtract your age from two hundred and twenty. Seventy percent of the answer will be the rate maximum your heart rate should reach during exercise. The higher the number, the more intense the exercise required. You may now select the exercise most suited to your requirements.

Popular aerobic activities for golfers include:

- Power walking
- Jogging
- Swimming
- Cycling

Regardless of the type of exercise selected, it must be performed for twenty to thirty minutes, three times each week.

If you suffer form any specific medical problems, be sure to discuss any new exercises with your doctor, to ensure they will not pose any extra risk to your health. Exercise regimens should be individualized to suit the needs of each person; there is not one exercise plan that will suit everybody.

Enhancing cardio-respiratory fitness is particularly important for those players who opt to walk the course, as it will ensure you have enough strength to maintain your

energy levels and concentration during a game.

Cardio-respiratory exercises will also aid in maintaining or losing weight (whichever is required), thus enabling optimal performance during a game.