

Improve Your Golf Game

By Torsten Stein, DC

Has this happened to you? Here you kind of missed out on your new year's resolution, but you still want to exercise. So you play a round of golf, enjoying the walking and the still cooler weather. Until you notice that you aren't doing so well. Your lower back hurts, you seem to have injured your rotator cuff and suddenly you feel really old. What is the solution? Give up golf? That's up to you. Follow these few tips and your game will improve and you will have less injuries on the green:

- Warm-up properly before your game. This doesn't just involve you placing your driver over your shoulders and twisting a little. You should come up with a short stretching routine that stretches not just your shoulders, but also your hips. Get your cardio-vascular system going by power walking for a few minutes. This will help your stamina for the whole round. This improves your game and decreases your chances of injury. It should be done not just on days when you play golf, but when you get up every morning. Do it over and over again and it will turn into a habit – a positive one!
- Invest into golf lessons. It doesn't matter how many golf videos you own, how many technique books you read – nothing beats the watchful eye of a good instructor. But remember this: Not “practice makes perfect” but “perfect practice makes perfect”. Your spine will thank you in years to come.
- Make sure to use equipment that fits you. I am 7'2" tall myself and I should have longer clubs than others. The right grip on your clubs are also important: many retirees prefer playing with larger grips and women often favor different grips than men.
- When playing, from time to time swing with your other hand as if you would be ambidextrous – this will keep your body more balanced. (You don't have to actually hit the ball with your other hand!) If you can, include stabilization and core exercises on your non-playing days.
- Walking is great for your spine, so use the golf course as your personal walkway. Skip the cart and make sure to pull your golf bag instead of carrying it.
- Wear the right-sized shoes on the course; I personally wear a size 18. I could squeeze into a 17 but walking around for a few hours wouldn't be comfortable.
- Your muscles don't like to get dehydrated so feed them plenty of water. Carry extra water in your golf bag, even though you might not be thirsty when you start your round, you will need it later.
- Keeping your spine in line is not just my job, but it helps your overall state of health. So it isn't just about headaches or lower back pain; it helps golf players as well. There is a reason why Tiger Woods travels with his own personal chiropractor.

Dr. Torsten Stein is a Board certified Chiropractic Physician. To receive his FREE weekly E-mail newsletter to learn more about Health, email him at: dr_stein@72doc.com or visit his website at: www.WorldsTallestChiropractor.com

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