

Injury Free Golfing Guide

Golf is a great sport that many often pick up later in life because they believe it is low stress on their body. While it seems logical that activities such as running or contact sports would be tougher on your body than swinging a 1-pound club, golf isn't necessarily ideal for a lifestyle free of aches and pain.

Though it is a fantastic way to get some exercise, socialize with friends, and satisfy a competitive itch; about 40% of recreational golfers get hurt every year (1). This means that if you golf for at least 3 years, it is likely you have had at least one significant injury from golfing.

These statistics are not just for those who are developing more aches and pains as they age, the injury rates are even higher for professional golfers. Many of whom, are in their 20s and 30s.

The most common injury for recreational and professional golfers is low back pain (1-3). For right-handed golfers, the pain most commonly shows up in the middle of the low back or on the left side. These pains and injuries are most likely to occur at impact with the ball or during the follow through (3).

PGA golfers such as Tiger Woods, Rory McIlroy, and many others have been plagued with low back injuries throughout their careers. But low back injuries are far from the only injury we see regularly in golf.

The forearm (including elbow and wrist) comes in as the second most injured area in the body. Foot (typically the lead foot), shoulder, and knee (also usually the lead knee) round out the other most common body parts to get injured while playing golf.

In professional golfers, the most frequent reason for injury is the repetitive swinging which creates overuse injuries. However, the number one reason for injuries in recreational golfers is poor movement patterns (biomechanics) and poor swing mechanics (1).

Why These Injuries Occur

Everyone's body is different from one another. You swing a golf club a little bit different than your buddy does. Your body type, mobility levels, strength, and swing mechanics all play into how you load your joints and muscles.

This is why you may get low back pain from playing, while your buddy has knee pain, and some others go long periods of time without ever having pain while golfing.

Aches, pains, and injuries during a game of golf can be all be traced back to either a lack of mobility, a lack of stability, or an overuse injury. A lack of mobility simply means that one or multiple key joints in your body is not moving enough to provide the motion necessary for your golf swing. This places excess stress on other areas of your body.

A lack of stability means that certain joints do not have the right muscular activation and control around them in order to maintain normal movement in that joint. This does not mean the muscles are not strong, it simply means all the muscles around the joint are not working together like they should.

An overuse injury occurs when the stress placed on the body exceeds what the body can handle. This is where muscles, tendons, and ligaments can start to break down.

It is rarely just one of these factors that solely contributes to an injury as multiple factors are usually at play. Nutritional and metabolic factors can also create inflammation which compounds any existing pain and injury. This is why anti-inflammatory medications may help ease your pain. Therefore, many injuries require and a physical and a nutritional approach to reach optimal recovery.

Physical Limitations vs Technical Problems

If you suffered an injury during a round of golf or want to be proactive in preventing against future injury, you should get evaluated by a medical professional who knows the mechanics and physical requirements for the golf swing.

This professional should be able to do a comprehensive exam and tell you if there are any mobility or stability deficits causing compensation in your movements or if it is simply an overuse injury. If you do have poor mechanics in your swing, this exam should also be able to tease out whether you have a physical limitation or technical problem with your swing.

If you have a physical limitation that is causing poor swing mechanics, then this means you have poor swing mechanics because your body cannot physically get into the right positions. To help fix this, you should seek conservative treatments such as soft tissue therapy, rehabilitation exercises, and joint manipulation/mobilization from a provider who understand your goals.

After any physical limitations such as mobility or stability deficits are restored, getting training under a good swing coach will help you use this increased range of motion to better your golf swing.





If you have pain during your golf swing but are diagnosed free of any mobility and stability limitations by a golf medical professional, then this means you simply have a technical error in your swing. Your body has the capability to do the right thing, but you just have not figured out how yet. This is where working with a good golf pro or swing coach is essential. They are best suited to teach you how to get your body in certain positions to improve your golf swing and reduce injury risk.

Determining If You Have a Physical Limitation

We came up with 5 simple tests that you can do at home to determine if you have the range of motion and stability that are necessary for having a pain-free golf swing! If you fail any of the

tests, this does not mean that you WILL have pain during your golf swing. It simply means you have a higher chance of developing pain or injury while golfing.

If you fail one of these tests or have pain during them, you have a physical limitation affecting your golf swing. If you pass all of these tests but still have pain when you swing, you have a technical error in your swing.

<u>Test</u>	<u>Starting Position</u>	<u>Movement</u>	<u>Instructions</u>
Rotation			<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Start with feet together- Keeping your feet flat on the ground, rotate your body as far as you can- Your shoulders should be within 10° of being in line with each other
Shoulder Mobility			<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Try to touch the opposite shoulder blade by reaching over your head in one smooth motion

Neck Mobility



- Rotate your head as far as you can
- You should be able to rotate your head 80°

Extension



- Lay face down with 2 shoes under your pelvis bone
- Press your upper body up while keeping your lower body on the ground
- You should be able to keep your pelvis on the 2 shoes

Core Stability



- Place hands under shoulders and knees under hips
- Raise knees a few inches off the ground while keeping your spine straight
- Raise one foot several inches off the ground
- You should be able to keep your spine and pelvis straight for 3 seconds in this position

If you failed any of the following tests and want to go about improving your mobility and stability for your golf swing, give us a call at 904-217-7078 and let us know which tests you failed!

These tests should all be pain-free! If you have pain during one of these tests, then you likely already have pain in your golf swing or in your regular daily activities. Call our office if you have pain during any of these movements and we can dive in deeper to give you a solution to get you out of pain and moving better than ever!