

CAN YOU TAKE THE STRAIN?

A poor swing can damage more than your scorecard. Physiotherapist Rob Wood looks at some typical golf injuries and shows you how to prevent them

FORE! TIP PICKING UP YOUR GOLF BAG



✓ Mmmm...



◆ Rob Wood is available for consultation at Active Life Physiotherapy Clinics, 15 Blackfriars St, King's Lynn, Norfolk. Tel: 0553 772292

NECK

Extreme tension is created as we try to keep the head down, and also by the right and left movement as the shoulders rotate around the still head. There's also a tendency to strain if you 'stub' the shot or go for a power overswing. Muscles and intervertebral joints can also be strained if you're not carefully warmed up. Take care – it's usually impossible to play with a neck injury.

PREVENTION Swing within yourself. Warm up properly before a round.

SHOULDERS

Prone to general tightness due to the anxiety factor of the game, but not a common site of true injury. Often shoulder mobility is hindered by referred pain from neck injuries.

WRISTS AND HANDS

All kinds of tendonitis-type conditions arise from the repetitive strain of the golf swing – thankfully, they are not very common. However, if allowed to develop they can become persistent. Blisters and callouses can become infected – if you're right-handed, try comparing callouses with your right-handed playing partners' right index finger. Left-handers vice versa. Poor grip surface and width is a major contributory factor to elbow, wrist and hand injury.

PREVENTION If you're a regular player, it's a good idea to change those grips yearly at least.

KNEES

The ligaments on the outside of your leading leg and the inside of your trailing leg can succumb to repetitive strain, especially if you don't release your hips properly, or if you play with 'heavy' fixed feet. In senior players, arthritis of the knee will be aggravated by distance walking and weight bearing.

PREVENTION Yet again, you have to look at your swing and make sure that all your moving parts are moving as they should be. See your local pro.

LOW BACK

This is the most common injury suffered by golfers – but bear in mind that one in four people suffer serious back pain at some stage in their life, regardless of whether they are golfers or not. The back is not commonly injured during the swing, but by stooping to pick up, for instance, a golf bag or ball. The complaint is then aggravated by the swing if you continue to play. Even a minor injury to your back will create protective muscle spasm, which ruins a golf swing. Fanatical young amateurs or pros who over practise can cause joint development problems and even stress fractures.

PREVENTION Tricky – back pain is so common in society because of the way we live. It's possible that golf worsens existing problems. Make sure you pick up objects in the correct way. Always warm up properly before you play.

HIPS

Can be restricted by referred back pain, but not usually a problem. Osteo-arthritic elderly hips can be aggravated by carrying a heavy bag for the length of time needed in a round of golf.

ELBOWS

'Golfer's Elbow' is a repetitive strain of the wrist and finger flexor muscles, usually on the inside of the elbow. It's a chronic inflammation and always aggravated by continuing to play golf – especially if you have a poor grip or a stiff-wristed technique. Golfer's Elbow varies in severity, so treatment ranges from simple rest and ice-packing to laser treatment and surgery.

PREVENTION You must swing with a correct grip. See your local pro if you have any doubts.



A grip to grit your teeth

ANKLES AND FEET

Sprained ankles are all too common. Overuse is possible as the ankles go through their swing gait. The outside of your leading ankle is extremely vulnerable and should immediately be treated with rest, ice and elevation. Inflammation of the heel and sole of the foot is a normally caused by inappropriate and ill-fitting footwear, aggravated by the distance walked. It can usually requires a long lay-off from the game.

