



Montana Chapter APTA
PO Box 8575
Missoula MT 59807
406-543-1823

What the Pros Already Know Form, Fitness, and Flexibility Give Golfers a Better Game

ALEXANDRIA, VA. The incredible achievements of Tiger Woods highlight a new athleticism associated with a sport that was once considered "leisurely." Today's professional golfers, both men and women, are faster, more flexible, and more powerful than ever before. They are more health conscious, participating in rigorous daily training, including weight lifting, flexibility exercises, aerobic conditioning, and sport-specific training to enhance body mechanics. According to the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), a health-conscious approach is just as important for the amateur golfer as it is for the pro. Awareness of proper form and the importance of fitness and flexibility will help the recreational golfer improve his or her game and may even lower that all-important handicap.

Keith Kleven, PT, MS, ATC, of Keith Kleven Physical Therapy in Las Vegas, Nevada, works with a number of prominent professional golfers, including Tiger Woods, Mark O'Meara, Kris Tschetter, and Emilee Klein. "A golfer often spends hundreds of dollars on the latest equipment, but forgets that his or her body is the most important piece of equipment," Kleven says. "The pros make it look easy, but the golf swing is actually one of the most difficult and complicated movements among all sports, requiring stability in some joints and flexibility in others. Bending the knees before swinging, rotating the hip and spine during the golf swing, and using proper range-of-motion techniques throughout the swing play a large role in preventing injuries." As an added bonus, a better swing results in a more accurate ball strike, a greater distance, and reduced stress on the muscles and joints. "While these facts apply to all golfers, female golfers' unique differences in anatomy, physiology, and body mechanics must be considered when designing a training program," Kleven adds.

Weekend golfers often attempt to swing with the speed and force of professional athletes, and often after sitting behind a desk all week and without warming up. "When the weekend comes, they hit the links and blast the golf balls as far as possible," says Kleven. "Seven-to-eight times a golfer's weight is compressed into the spine with every swing. With this kind of force, it's easy to damage discs and strain muscles." In fact, the most common injuries among golfers involve the spine, including the upper and lower back and neck.

Flexibility is as important as proper form. Golfers of all ages and abilities should make a habit of warming up and stretching beforehand. "It is important for golfers to spend at least 20 minutes warming up and stretching all the major muscle groups, especially the back and the lower extremities, before practice or play. They shouldn't wait until they're on the course before stretching, because that is neither practical nor conducive to a thorough stretch," says Kleven.

Cardiovascular conditioning also plays a crucial role in performance. Fatigue can result in poor performance due to lack of coordinated body movements. To keep endurance up and muscles warm and conditioned, Kleven suggests golfers walk the course whenever possible. He also states that continued aerobic conditioning is an essential component of fitness for golf. And strength training is also an excellent injury-prevention tool that can ultimately help golfers improve their game.

For more information on staying in shape for the next tee-off, send a business-size SASE to "Fit for the Fairway," APTA, P.O. Box 37257, Washington, DC 20013. Or visit APTA's Web site at www.apta.org for more information.

The American Physical Therapy Association is a national professional organization representing nearly 70,000 members. Its goal is to foster advancements in physical therapy practice, research and education.

All contents © 2005 American Physical Therapy Association. All Rights Reserved. Disclaimer. Privacy Policy.

Montana Chapter APTA
 PO Box 217
 Helena, MT 59624
 406-442-4141

FIT FOR THE FAIRWAY



Stretching before playing golf can enhance your ability to hit the ball, while decreasing your chances of injury. First warm up for 5-10 minutes. Then do the following stretches 10-15 minutes before playing a round and periodically as you play the course. Repeat each stretch 4-5 times on each side.



1. Trunk and Upper-Body Stretch
 Put a golf club in front of your chest, rotate slowly to the right and hold for 10-20 seconds. Then rotate to the left for the same amount of time.



2. Side Stretch
 Stand with arms above head, holding club with hands shoulder width apart. Slowly bend to the right and hold for 10 seconds. Bend to the left and hold for 10 seconds.



3. Calf Stretch
 Place both hands against a tree at chest level, and stand arm's length away. Keeping your right foot on the ground, and your right leg slightly bent, move your left foot back behind you, keeping the knee straightened. Try to touch your heel to the ground. Hold for a count of 10. Do not bounce. Repeat stretch with other leg.

Many people are unaware of their poor posture while golfing. The incorrect stance can lead to an increased risk of spinal injury. The correct stance takes pressure off the lower back area, while generating the power from the trunk, hips, and legs needed for a good swing.



right

Slightly bend knees into a relaxed position.

Bend forward from the hips, keeping the back straight.

Arms should hang straight down comfortably while gripping the club.



wrong

None of these stretching exercises should cause pain or discomfort. These exercise tips are not a substitute for seeing a physical therapist or physician.