

Begin a Golf Warm-up Routine This Summer

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Another Minnesota winter is behind us as the weather becomes warmer. It is this time of year that area golf courses begin to open and many people begin taking their first swings of the golf clubs in several months. Golf is unique because it is one of the few sports that individuals can play, often at improving levels, throughout a lifetime. Every year people spend millions of dollars on professional golf instruction and new equipment to improve their golf game. While professional instruction and better equipment will improve a person's golf game, injuries still can occur. Pain from such injuries cause people to limit their ability to play if not lose their enjoyment of the sport. Low back, neck, shoulder, and elbow injuries are the most common. What many people do not realize is that injury rates can be lowered and performance levels increased by doing something prior to ever hitting the ball off the first tee. Proper warm-up and stretching gets the most important piece of golf equipment, the human body, ready for physical activity.

When arriving at a golf course, avoid going straight from your vehicle to the first tee box. Start a golf warm-up routine this summer. Prior to swinging a club, take a short walk followed by some light stretching. This will prepare your body for the activity ahead. An increase in muscle elasticity will allow for greater power potential and a decrease in the likelihood of muscle strains. I recommend several stretches prior to the start of your round:

Stretch #1 Sitting Rotation - Keeping your hips and legs still, gently rotate your trunk side to side in a small, pain free range of motion. Hold for 10 seconds and perform 10 repetitions to each side.

Stretch#2 Hip - Lying on your back, cross your right leg over your left. Gently pull your left knee toward your chest until a comfortable stretch is felt in the buttock/hip area. Hold for 30 seconds and repeat 3 times. Repeat on the opposite leg.

Stretch #3 Club Stretch - Place the club in your left hand behind your back. Reach over with your head with your right hand and grab the club. Pull your left arm up behind your back by pulling club with your right arm. Hold for 10 seconds and perform 10 repetitions. Repeat on the opposite side.

Stretch #4 Pectoralis Corner Stretch - Stand in a corner with your hands and forearms flat against the wall. Hands should be placed at head level and feet approximately 2 feet from the corner. Slowly lean forward until a comfortable stretch is felt across the chest. Hold for 30 seconds and perform 3 repetitions.

Stretch #5 Upper Trunk Lateral Flexion - While standing, tighten your abdominals while keeping your back straight and hands crossed overhead. Lean to one side without twisting. Hold for 30 seconds. Repeat on the opposite side. Perform 3 repetitions to each side.

So, the next time you head to the golf course or range, begin with a warm-up routine. Your warm-up routine can become part of your game and can help you to enjoy this lifetime sport for many years to come.