PHYSIO ROOM

GOLF INJURIES GUIDE
Golf and Physical Injury

Golfers are no strangers to injuries, and indeed, as spectators of the sport we’re more than familiar with seeing the likes of Tiger Woods or Rory McIlroy struggling with an injury.

Injuries have been reported to affect 15-20% of golfers each year. Most ailments related to golf are due to overuse, but there are some traumatic injuries that can occur on the golf course.

Golf as an activity requires explosive power for driving off the tee and fairways. These repeated actions can put large amounts of stress on the tissues and cause injuries.

Lower back pain is the most common golf injury, accounting for around 20% of all golf injuries suffered. Other commonly occurring injuries include elbow pain, shoulder pain, foot pain and knee pain.

The research evidence indicates that recreational golfers tend to sustain more golf injuries than professional level golfers and that more injuries occur as players get older.

Generally, overuse injuries tend to occur as we get older because the joint and tendon tissues become less able to withstand stress. It is often the case for golfers that the injury is sustained during some other sport or activity, but is then aggravated during golf.

This guide aims to break down five of the most common golf injuries, by telling you what they are, how you might prevent them and how to treat them.

We’ll also offer some product recommendations along the way. So come, join us...

Things to remember when buying a brace or support:

• What type do I need? Golf appropriate braces and supports come in different shapes and sizes, but can usually be categorised into four types, sleeves, supports, stabilisers and hinges. Sleeves easily slip over the leg or arm, while supports are adjustable and usually wrap around the knee. Stabilisers offer advanced support by featuring steel springs either side of the joint. While hinged braces allow the joint to move in a natural motion while offering the most support.

• What style do I want? There are two standard styles of braces, the slip-on or the wraparound. Slip-ons are used by putting your foot through the brace and pulling up the leg. While wraparound braces, of course, wrap around and can usually be adjusted by straps made of such material as Velcro.

• What size do I need? This all depends on which brace or support you choose. Typically, each will feature a size guide, but may require some DIY measuring for products such as knee braces. If you are between sizes, it’s often recommended you go for the larger size, but this may vary from product to product.
LOWER BACK PAIN

What is it?

Pain in the lower back is the most common golf injury there is. The repetitive action of the golf swing is the number one cause of lower back pain in golfers, so golf swing faults should be corrected by a professional. When the spine deviates from the vertical during a swing is the cause of the pain, known as a ‘reverse angle’ swing fault.

Numerous structures of the lower back can be affected - the discs, ligaments, muscles or facet joints - but in golfers, particularly older ones, the discs are most commonly affected. A herniated disc or ‘slipped disc’ refers to a protrusion of gel material from inside the disc. This can cause back pain and/or sciatica, particularly when bending forwards.

How can you prevent it?

Research has shown that specific back exercises, known as core strength and stability exercises, can be effective in the prevention of lower back pain. These back exercises are most effective where the back pain is caused by poor posture combined with the stress of a faulty golf swing.

Advanced core strength exercises using swiss balls can be used to relieve and prevent back pain.

Treatment

Pain-relieving medication prescribed by a doctor and heat packs are usually necessary during the first few days following a herniated disc. Research has shown that patients with a herniated disc should remain as active as they possibly can, so long as their symptoms are not aggravated. A back brace can be helpful to improve posture and relieve pain by preventing aggravating movements.

For a heat pack option, check out the below product...

• The PhysioRoom.com Instant Heat Pack is a mouldable pack that becomes an instant therapeutic heat pack. Ideal for soothing warm pain relief.

• Instant Heat Packs are ideal for use in the treatment of pain and muscle spasms, in circumstances where you don’t have access to an external heat source. Ideal for applications such as neck pain, arthritis, back injuries and shoulder injuries. Instant Heat Packs can be carried on day trips and away matches where conventional hot packs are not practical.

• Instant Hot Packs are activated by squeezing an internal compartment within the pack. This starts a chemical reaction that instantly makes the pack warm. The Instant Hot Pack stays warm for 15 to 20 minutes. Single use only.
GOLFER’S ELBOW

What is it?

Golfer’s Elbow is inflammation of the tendons of the forearm at the point where they insert into the humerus (upper arm) bone on the inner side of the elbow. This inflammation is caused by forceful gripping activities such as when gripping the golf club, particularly if you have a ‘wristy’ technique.

Golfer’s Elbow causes pain when the inner part of the elbow (medial epicondyle) is touched, and also if the elbow is straight and the hand is moved forward and back at the wrist.

How can you prevent it?

Gripping the golf club too hard can bring on the Golfer’s Elbow pain. If you play golf for the first time in a long while make sure that you regularly stretch the muscles which work over the wrist by doing ‘limp-wrist’ and ‘policeman halting traffic’ type stretches.

Many people get symptomatic relief from Golfer’s Elbow by wearing an elbow compression strap. Elbow straps work by preventing the wrist extensor muscles from contracting fully, thus reducing the strain on the tendons at the elbow. This reduces elbow pain.

Treatment

The inflammation of Golfer’s Elbow usually responds well to rest and ice therapy, as well as anti-inflammatory medication prescribed by a doctor. Golfer’s Elbow rehabilitation is achieved using a resistance band strengthening programme for the flexor tendons. It’s crucial that the load and number of repetitions are carefully recorded and progressively increased under the supervision of a Chartered Physiotherapist. This ensures that the overload on the tendon is carefully controlled and gradually increased.

For a resistance band option, check out the below product...

- The PhysioRoom.com Stronger Resistance Exercise Band is great for injury rehabilitation and strength training exercises. These bands are a great way to add variety to your standard workout.

- Suitable for everyday use - muscle groups and tendons can be stretched and strengthened as part of rehabilitation training or sports training. With a choice of four levels of resistance you can gradually ease back into exercise or take on progressive training.

- Available in four levels of resistance - these bands offer progressive training options and aid to build muscle strength. Start with the lowest level of resistance and build gradually - once the exercises become too easy, move on to the next level of resistance provided by the next band.
PLANTAR FASCIITIS

What is it?

Plantar Fasciitis is inflammation of the plantar fascia (a fibrous sheath under the sole of the foot), at its attachment to the heel bone. It is a common cause of heel pain in golfers that typically comes on when walking round the golf course. Plantar Fasciitis is particularly prevalent in those golfers with poor foot wear. Pain is common on the underside of the heel and the sole of the foot. A common sign of Plantar Fasciitis is heel pain upon waking in the morning when taking the first steps of the day.

How can you prevent it?

Inappropriate footwear plays a major role in the development of Plantar Fasciitis. Golf shoes that have a lack of support for the sole of the foot are the biggest culprits, causing foot pain when walking around the course. A lack of support for the arch of the foot can cause excessive pronation (uncontrolled lowering of the arch) that can predispose golfers to Plantar Fasciitis.

Research has shown that orthotic insoles that support the arch on the inner side of the foot can be helpful for limiting excessive pronation and preventing the pain of Plantar Fasciitis and heel pain.

Treatment

Apply ice packs (never apply ice directly to the skin) to the heel and sole of the foot for pain relief. Anti-inflammatory drugs prescribed by a doctor can provide relief for painful Plantar Fasciitis and wearing a heel support can take the strain off the painful heel when walking and playing golf.

Once the pain of Plantar Fasciitis begins to settle then stretching the plantar fascia helps to speed up healing in over 80% of cases. A Plantar Fasciitis night splint applies a sustained stretch to the plantar fascia during sleep, which helps to stretch and align the tissues and relieve foot pain.

For some suitable insoles, try the below product...

• The Enertor Performance Insoles are designed by leading podiatrists and made with D3O impact protection technology. This patented smart material cushions the foot when moved slowly, but on impact the material locks together to absorb and disperse energy before instantly returning to its flexible state.

• General improvement of shock protection in the heel and midfoot. Ideal for those that experience heel pain, forefoot discomfort and/or lower limb fatigue as a result of being on their feet for long periods at any one time.

• Great for alleviating the symptoms of Plantar Fasciitis. Enertor conducted a study that found 91% of those wearing their insoles reported an improvement in their overall level of pain and levels of overall pain reduced by 35% on average after wearing insoles for 4 weeks.
KNEE PAIN

What is it?

Knee pain is fairly common in golfers. Weight bearing and rotational forces on the knee during the golf swing, in addition to prolonged walking can aggravate existing knee injuries and lead to knee pain, particularly in the leading knee. Often the original knee injury is sustained doing a different activity or sport, but later in life golf becomes the activity that causes knee swelling and pain. Previous injuries to the meniscus (cartilage) or cruciate ligaments can predispose the knee joint to arthritis that can flare up due to the stresses placed on the knee during golf.

How can you prevent it?

Pain in the knee joint can lead to weakness of the quadriceps (thigh) muscles. This leads to a vicious circle of further knee joint instability and more pain, leading to more inhibition and muscle weakness. Exercises to maintain quadricep and hamstring muscle strength are encouraged to provide support for the affected joint. This strengthening should be done under the supervision of a chartered physiotherapist.

Treatment

A rest from golf is usually needed to prevent further stress on the knee joint. Ice packs can be applied for periods of twenty minutes every couple of hours (never apply ice directly to the skin as it can cause an ice burn). Alternatively an Aircast CryoCuff ice and compression device can relieve knee pain and swelling.

A knee brace can provide support and help to relieve knee pain during golf. Knee pain from arthritis tends to be worse in colder weather so many people find that a knee support can provide warmth and support.

For a knee support option, look at the below product...

• The PhysioRoom.com Neoprene Stabilising Knee Support is an ultra-comfortable hinge-free knee brace that provides support for cartilage injuries, mild arthritis and collateral knee ligament injuries.

• Made from multi-directional stretch neoprene this knee support provides excellent levels of comfort and support. Two lateral and medial flexible steel springs offer support to the knee joint, while the stabilising upper Velcro straps provide a customised fit for a secure fit and comfort.

• An extra-soft patella pad protects and stabilises the knee cap, helping to prevent displacement, while the open patella gives ventilation and relieves pressure on the knee cap itself. the shoulder still and supported helps to relieve shoulder pain and encourages healing following shoulder surgery or a shoulder injury.
What is it?

Shoulder pain can occur in golfers due to damage to the rotator cuff muscles. The rotator cuff muscles (subscapularis, supraspinatus, infraspinatus and teres minor) are small muscles situated around the shoulder joint, which can become damaged during the repeated stresses of the golf swing, particularly if there is a swing fault such as ‘Chicken Winging’ (bent elbows at ball contact) or a ‘C-Shaped Posture’ (rounded lower back) that can put too much stress on the shoulders.

Rotator cuff injuries usually begin as inflammation (tendonitis) caused by small but repeated irritation. If the cause of the inflammation is not addressed, and continues over a long period of time, partial tears may develop in the cuff that could eventually become a tear all the way through one or more of the rotator cuff muscles.

How can you prevent it?

Golfers have to ensure they maintain flexibility, strength and endurance of the shoulder muscles. Shoulder stabilisation exercises using resistance bands under the supervision of a chartered physiotherapist can also help prevent pressure on the rotator cuff tendons.

In addition, golf swing technique should be checked by a professional to ensure that the shoulder posture and co-ordination during golf doesn’t overload the rotator cuff muscles.

• The Ultimate Performance Neoprene Shoulder Support is a combination of therapeutic heat and support that promotes improved healing after shoulder injuries and complaints such as arthritis and rotator cuff tendonitis.

• This bilateral support (can be worn on left or right shoulder) warms the shoulder while giving stability and joint flexibility to quicken the healing process. Made from soft neoprene, it can be worn all day for comfort against tendonitis, shoulder instability, shoulder dislocation and arthritis.

Treatment

Physiotherapy treatment aims to reduce the amount of inflammation using ice therapy (never apply ice directly to the skin) and anti-inflammatory medication prescribed by a doctor. Anti-inflammatory gel may be more appropriate where anti-inflammatory tablets are not well tolerated. For those who want to continue to play golf a neoprene shoulder support can provide support and reassurance.

For a shoulder support to wear during your rehab, try the product below...
Group First House,
12a Mead Way,
Padiham,
Lancashire,
BB12 7NG.