

Greater Golfing.

Avoiding injury and
improving your
performance.

5 Common Golf Injuries.

Shoulder Pain

The repetitive motions of the swing can cause the tendons in our shoulders to become inflamed, so the more often you play, the more likely it is to occur. Making sure to stretch the muscles, such as by using resistance bands, is key to staving off these sorts of injuries.

Golfer's Elbow

Golfer's elbow is a result of the inflammation of the tendons on the inside of the elbow. This occurs as a result of gripping the club, and is characterised by pain on the inside of the elbow, particularly when touched. Avoid gripping the club too forcefully, and make sure to stretch the muscles to loosen them up a bit.

Lower Back Pain

Lower back pain is the most common injury suffered by golfers every year, and possibly the one that will impact your game the most. Unfortunately, if you are experiencing lower back pain as a result of your swing, it more than likely means you are swinging incorrectly, in which case a professional golf trainer may need to teach you how to swing in such a way as to prevent this kind of injury from recurring.

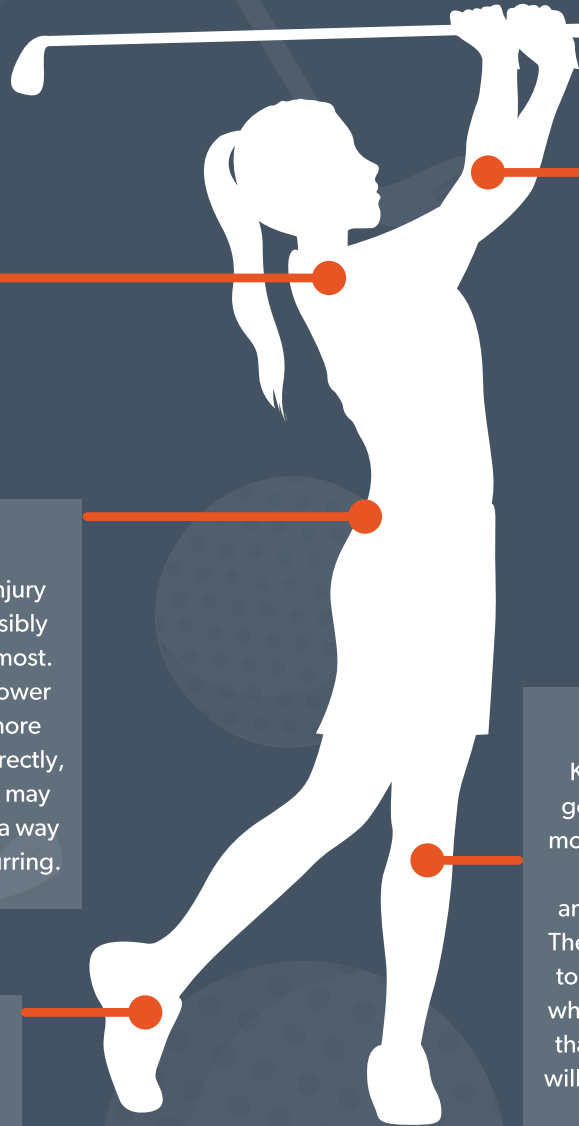
Knee Pain

Knee pain is a very common problem in golfers not only because of the repetitive motions golfing entails, but also because of the fact that they bear a considerable amount of weight when preparing a shot. The best way to prevent this is to make sure to strengthen your thighs and hamstrings, which will mean your knees are doing more than the actions involved in swinging, and will help you deal with the weight placed on them when playing.

Plantar Fasciitis

Plantar fasciitis is the inflammation of the ligament that runs from our toes to our heels. This occurs in golfers primarily for two reasons: walking, and improper footwear. Fortunately, both of these are easy to address, and the issue can usually be resolved by either buying new shoes, or possibly orthotics.

While golf may not be a contact sport, one in five golfers will sustain an injury each year. If you are shocked by that figure, don't be. The reason it is so high is that golf is a sport that involves extremely repetitive movements, which can lead to a whole host of issues - overuse injuries being one of the most common.





8 Ways To Improve Your Swing & Reduce Your Handicap.

Everyone is competitive; it's in our nature. No matter what task is at hand, we always strive to do our best. It's no different when it comes to playing golf.

So, maybe it is time to take action into your own hands and improve your golf handicap. Not only will you feel more confident on the course, with better results when you get to the clubhouse, but improving your game will also give your physical health and wellbeing a boost too.

1. Warm Up

Studies have shown up to 62.5% of golfers never perform a warm-up routine prior to their golf practice, despite the positive physiological and performance benefits associated with implementing this into their pregame routine. Such benefits include: reduced risk of injury, improved muscle strength and power, improved rate of force development and reaction time, improved coordination. Moreover, each of the movements performed in the warm up should be dynamic.

Dynamic movements have greater performance benefits than static stretching which has been shown to reduce muscle power output prior to exercise. The 'RAMP' approach has shown performance enhancement qualities and is as follows:

- **R**aise – body temperature, heart rate, respiration rate, blood flow and joint fluid viscosity
- **A**ctivate – key muscle groups
- **M**obilise – key joints and range of motion specific to the sport
- **P**otentiate – high intensity dynamic exercises to mimic performance

2. Mobility - Motion Is Lotion!

Golfers require adequate flexibility for a long flowing swing. The main areas a golfer requires mobility are their hips, shoulders and middle part of their back (thoracic spine). Good flexibility through all of these joints allows the body to rotate further on the axis that the club travels around. Greater rotation means a longer arc for the club to follow through which has

numerous performance benefits including hitting the ball further and potentially adopting a better swing rhythm.

Shoulders: Some golfers may be unable to lift one/or both arms up high enough above their head; these asymmetries can affect both their backswing and follow through. These restrictions may be a result of muscular tightness (pectorals, lats, posterior rotator cuff), joint tightness (glenohumeral joint capsule) or even a lack of strength in key muscle groups (scapular retractors, rotator cuff muscles, serratus anterior).

Thoracic Spine: Many golfers lack flexibility through their thoracic spine. As we get older we tend to stiffen up in this area. Without sufficient rotation in the thoracic spine the entire swing relies on only hip and shoulder movement, consequently reducing the arc size the club head has to work within.

Reduced mobility may also increase shearing forces on the lumbar spine which may lead to different movement patterns, muscular imbalances and potentially pain further down the line.

Hips: The hip joints are a major contributor to rotating the body in a golf swing. Particularly the front of the hip as it has to turn inwards during the follow through of a golf swing. It can be very difficult to improve internal rotation mobility for some individuals as hip joint architecture or bony abnormalities can restrict movement in this direction. However, many golfers just have tight hip joint muscles (hip flexors, glutes), joint capsules or ligaments restricting their movement.

3. Build Strength & Resiliency

Resistance training should be performed a minimum of twice a week in order to improve strength or power. The main areas that we need to look at strengthening for golfers are the upper leg muscles and core musculature.

Even though a lot of the swinging happens with the arms, most of the power generated in a golf swing actually comes from the hips and core. Imagine in the backswing that the body is being wound up like a rubber band: the unwinding should start at the hips and pelvis, then culminate in the arms and hands generating clubhead speed.

Hip Strengthening: Strong hip muscles benefit golfers in two ways. One is the generation of power, the other is surviving the 5-6 km roundtrip on the course. There is a group of small muscles that surround the hip providing stability and support, but we are more





interested in the bigger ones, known as the glutes. They serve 2 major functions: the first is to rotate the hip, which is very useful for a powerful golf swing, and the second is to pull the leg through when walking or running (propulsion).

Core Strengthening: Core muscles is a fairly broad term that applies to most of the muscles in the abdomen and spine region. We don't need rock hard abs to have a good golf swing. However, what we do need are good back extensors and oblique strength endurance. The back extensors help maintain a good posture during stance and throughout the swing. The main function of the obliques involves rotating the thorax, which is crucial for generating a powerful golf swing.

If you can build up strength in these muscle groups you will be less likely to develop fatigue in your swing towards the end of a round and will comfortably hit the fairway from start to finish.

4. Technique - Practice Your Swing!

This one is pretty straightforward, but golfers must practice their golf swing and form in order to achieve a better swing and ultimately reduce their handicap. Practice makes perfect after all, it's just the law of specificity.

The golf swing is an art that involves multiple moving segments (your arms, legs and the golf club) around one stable link (your core). A breakdown in any one of those segments can ruin your day and even your season.

Additionally, swinging a golf club requires moving at a very high speed in a short amount of time, increasing the risk of injury. So going to the driving range, practising your pitch and putt or even taking lessons; it's important to get into the swing of things (excuse the pun!) sooner rather than later to reduce your handicap.

5. Aerobic Fitness & Stamina

The average length of a golf course is just over 6km. So, with that being said, after carrying clubs over your shoulders or pulling/pushing a golf cart for that distance, some golfers might feel exhausted approaching the 18th hole. Therefore, it's vital that golfers have an adequate baseline fitness to cover the distances required on the golf course to prevent fatigue setting in and affecting their performance.

The national guidelines for physical activity in Ireland suggests individuals should carry out a minimum of 150-300 minutes of moderate aerobic activity a week (able to hold a conversation) e.g. brisk walk, cycling or 75-150 mins of vigorous aerobic activity a week (unable to hold a conversation), e.g. fast tempo jogging or swimming, for additional cardiovascular health benefits.

6. Equipment

Reduce strain by using the right equipment. Golfing gear, such as your shoes, clubs and bag, are meant to ease the work, not cause additional strain. Therefore, reduce strain by fitting the clubs to the golfer and not the golfer to the clubs. Also here's a few tips on how to effortlessly move around the course to reduce the likelihood of developing golf related aches and pains:

- Always carry your golf bag over both shoulders and walk upright. If you have a one-strap system, alternate sides often
- Push, rather than pull, wheeled golf carts
- Hold your clubs with a loose, comfortable grip to reduce straining your hands and forearms
- When standing for long periods, stand tall, not slouched, and occasionally shift your weight from one foot to the other

or rest one foot on your golf bag or cart.

7. Sleep Supplementation

Does dreaming about playing golf make you a better player? Not necessarily, however our ability to perform on the golf course is directly impacted by the quality of your sleep. In fact, poor quality or lack of sleep directly impacts your fitness both physically and mentally which is detrimental to your performance.

Golfers need quality sleep for their body to repair and recover from exercise and especially from playing a round of golf. It's also required to enable golfers to think well and use the mental skills they've developed to full effect on the golf course. Research suggests anywhere between 8-10 hours of shut-eye is the desired amount of rest golfers should aim to achieve every night to maximise their performance capabilities.

8. Cool Down

Following your game and before heading home, it's advised to stretch again in order to reduce the severity of subsequent muscular aches and pain known as DOMS (delayed onset muscle soreness), as well as to work on any flexibility issues you may individually have.

To cool-down it is better to use static stretches, rather than the dynamic stretches performed in the warm up. All you have to do is slowly take your muscles to the end of their range of motion and hold it there for 20-30 seconds. You should feel slight resistance in the muscle as you stretch it, but you should never feel pain during a stretch.

An adequate warm-up and cool-down routine for golf can mean the difference between a good game and a great game, so next time you are heading out to the green

don't forget to factor in enough extra time for you to both prepare and cool-down your body; your muscles, joints and score card will thank you for it in the long run!

So there you have it, 8 sure fire ways to improve your golf swing and reduce your handicap. Be sure to try and implement these suggestions into your schedule and practise them consistently. Before you know it you'll be walking down the fairway in Augusta with your green jacket on!

It's important that if, on your way to success, you become aware or concerned regarding any aches or pains to contact your local Chartered Physiotherapist and book an assessment in order to prevent any long-term issues developing that may affect your performance down the line.





Avoiding Pain During Golf.

Before The Round

- Warm-ups are crucial. Brisk walks and stretches on the practice range are good ways to warm up.
- Our bodies are usually in a dehydrated state in the morning, so when playing golf early in the morning drink plenty of fluids the night before to make sure you are properly hydrated.
- A small meal 1-2 hours before play is advised. Larger meals in your stomach move blood away from your brain and muscles, which in turn affects performance.
- If you feel they are necessary, specialised grips (help hand arthritis), golf shoes (reduce stress on hips, knees, ankles) and braces for various joints can all help to reduce pain during a round.

During The Round

- Minimize time in a golf cart if you are able to, switch to walking or riding in the cart every second hole. This protects back muscles from potential spasm caused by the bouncing of the cart.
- Drink plenty of water or sports drinks, especially during hotter, humid weather.
- Sunscreen and hats are essential during the summer. Even a mild Irish day can burn skin and a round of golf usually means total exposure for a long period of time.
- Snacking on foods high in carbohydrates is a good idea: bananas, dried fruits, wholegrain energy bars and nuts are all good choices and will keep you going throughout your game.

After The Round

- Perform static stretches after your game. This helps to decrease muscle tightness and joint stiffness the following day.
- Ice any sore or injured area for 15-20 minutes to reduce any inflammation which may be present.
- Hydrate again and eat. This ensures that your body replaces its stores of glycogen (the body's source of energy) in the muscles, which allows for recovery the following day.
- Many golfers try to play through injuries, mainly related to the lower back, elbows or shoulders. It is strongly advised that anyone with any injury should try to rectify the problem before returning to the driving range or golf course.



Eat Your Way To A Better Round.

Life is busy and finding time to eat a nutritionally balanced diet can be a struggle. We live in a culture of convenience foods which may not always be packed with the essential nutrients that your body requires; especially if you are active regularly.

Couple that with conflicting and confusing sports nutrition available and it can be an absolute mission trying to figure out what to eat and when. If you train a lot or partake in competitive sports, then having a basic understanding of eating to fuel your activity is essential.

Just like a car needs the right fuel, oil, water and maintenance, your body requires essential nutrients from food so that it can perform at its best. Failing to meet your nutritional requirements might leave you feeling lethargic, fatigued and failing to recover as quickly after training sessions and events.

With all of that in mind, let's look 5 essential nutrients required by anyone who is active, and where to find them.



Carbohydrates

Why We Need Them

Carbohydrates get a bad rep because many people associate a high carbohydrate diet with weight gain. This is a myth and it is not the case if you choose your carbohydrates wisely.

Think of carbohydrates as your source of energy or like putting petrol in a car. The more active you are, the more you will need to up your carbohydrate intake (exactly like how a car driven regularly needs to be re-fuelled regularly).

An active person who limits their carbohydrate intake may find that they don't have energy to perform at their best and may not recover quickly between sessions.

There are 2 main types of carbohydrates: fast and slow release. Both are useful in a diet to fuel sports, but timing is key. Fast (white) versions will still give you the energy you need, but slow (wholegrain) versions tend to offer more health benefits.

Where To Get Them

- Aim to consume slow release carbohydrates throughout the day and fast release carbohydrates 1-2 hours before your game, as well as throughout the round if needed.
- During the day, aim to comprise 1/3 of your main meals with slow releasing carbohydrate - e.g. oats, Weetabix, brown pasta, brown rice, wholegrain bread or wraps, sweet potato or potato, couscous, quinoa or other whole grains.
- 1-2 hours before your game, you might find it helpful to top up your energy stores by eating a light snack based on a carbohydrate e.g. toast and banana, fruit & granola and honey, dried fruit and nuts.
- After your round, you can replace your stored energy (glycogen) by having a light snack or a meal containing carbohydrate. This means you will be ready to go for your next activity session.

Protein

Why We Need It

Although the supplement industry may lead you to believe that we are all lacking in protein, this is actually rare in Western countries.

Protein is found naturally in many of the everyday foods that we eat, and if you are following a well-balanced diet, there should be no need to supplement.

Protein is essential for repair and recovery of muscles and cells, so this is essential to prioritise in your diet if you are active.

Where To Get It

- Aim to make 1/3 of your meals based around protein - e.g. eggs, chicken, turkey, red meat, fish, tofu, legumes (beans, chickpeas, peas and lentils), cottage cheese, yoghurt, etc.
- 1-2 hours before your game, you might find it helpful add a source of protein to your snack, e.g. cottage cheese, nuts, yoghurt, eggs.

Fats

Why We Need Them

Healthy fats are so important to provide the body with fat soluble vitamins, energy and essential fatty acids. They are really important for mental health, as well as physical health.

Although it can be tempting when you are active to "eat what you want", try to limit processed foods like pizzas, doughnuts, cakes and biscuits - whilst high in fat, they are not beneficial for sports or health.

Where To Get Them

- Healthy fats from oily fish (salmon, mackerel, herring) as well as nuts, seeds and avocados are beneficial in the diet in small amounts.
- Try snacking on a small handful of nuts with fruit or yoghurt, add seeds to your daily porridge or smoothie or top off a salad with half an avocado.
- Fats are energy rich, though, and can lead to weight gain if eaten in large quantities, so portion control is key here.

Vitamins & Minerals

Why We Need Them

Just like a car needs oil in order to function, your body requires vitamins and minerals to function at its best too. As your body can't make them, a well-balanced diet is essential to give your body what it needs.

A deficiency can lead to feeling tired and run down. Nutrients of concern for active people include iron, calcium, B vitamins and vitamin D. A quick blood test by your GP can signal if you are deficient in any of these key nutrients.

In general, if you are eating for appetite and not restricting your food intake whilst eating a wide variety of foods, you should be meeting your requirements. Aim to eat the rainbow and eat as many different types of fruits and veg as possible.

Where To Get Them

- Try to make 1/3 of every meal fruit or vegetables to ensure that your body is getting the nutrients that it requires. Soups, salads, roasted vegetables, smoothies, crudites and raw whole fruit are all ways to reach your recommended intake.
- Aim to consume milk, yoghurts or cheese 3-5 times a day depending on your age (children, teenagers and young adults need more while they are actively growing bones). These are excellent sources of calcium.
- Good sources of iron include red meat, chicken, turkey, eggs and legumes, so if you are adding a good quality protein source to main meals you should be meeting your quota.

Water

Why We Need It

Water is often overlooked when it comes to nutrients of concern for athletes. Hydration is extremely important to stay healthy when you are active.

Remember that it is important to drink before, during and after a game of golf.

Aiming for 2-3 litres of water per day is the general rule of thumb.

How To Get Enough

- You might feel tired or have a headache. In general aim for a pale straw coloured urine and that is a great way to know that you are meeting your body's water requirements.
- Our best tip is to carry a refillable bottle with you every day; this way it's easier to remember how many times you refill than try to count glasses!

Putting It All Together

It is best to eat regularly throughout the day with a light snack 1-2 hours pre-training and again post-activity. This is to help prepare your body for action and recovery. Don't stress out though if you miss a meal: the most important thing is that 80% of the time you are aiming to make healthy choices, which will help to boost your performance.

We are all different so don't be afraid to experiment a little to find the approach that suits you best.

Some Pre Golf Ideas

- Porridge with yoghurt, nuts and mixed berries
- Weetabix with milk and banana
- Chicken sandwich with avocado and salad
- Sweet potato with salmon and roasted vegetables
- Chicken curry with rice and vegetables
- Spaghetti bolognese with vegetables

Some Post Golf Ideas

- Pitta bread with cottage cheese and honey
- Bagel with sliced fruit and natural nut butter
- Chocolate milk and nuts
- Smoothie made with milk and frozen fruit



Snack Ideas.

- **30g nuts & a piece of fruit (e.g. banana)**
 - **3-4 oat cakes + homemade guacamole or hummus**
 - **Energy balls or bars made with wholefood ingredients (i.e. dried fruit, nuts, seeds, oats)**
 - **Fresh fruit - apple, pear, berries, banana**
 - **Wholegrain bread + 1 tbsp peanut or almond butter + 1 banana**
 - **1 bag of air popped popcorn + portion low fat cheese**
 - **DIY trail mix: Mix 30g nuts + 1 medium box of raisins or 30g other dried fruit**
 - **Natural beef jerky**
 - **Hard boiled eggs**
 - **Wholegrain bread + sliced ham + sliced cheese sandwich**
- ✓ **Balanced with carbohydrate, protein and healthy fat**
 - ✓ **Colourful to maximise the vitamin & mineral potential**
 - ✓ **Ingredients you can pronounce**

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