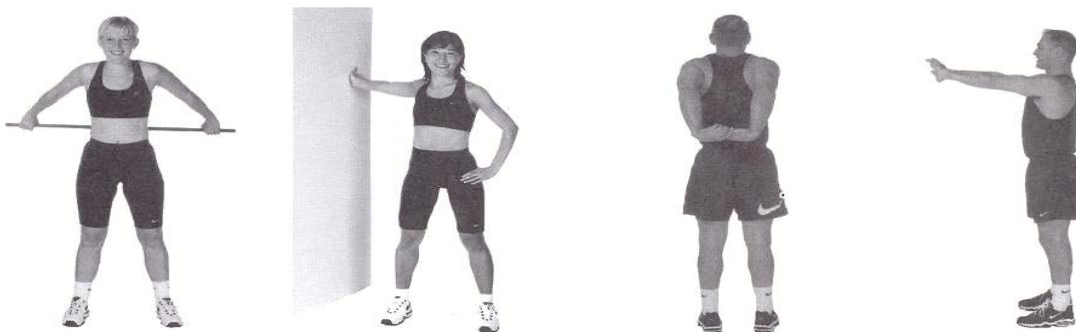


TIPS FOR A HEALTHY GOLF LIFESTYLE

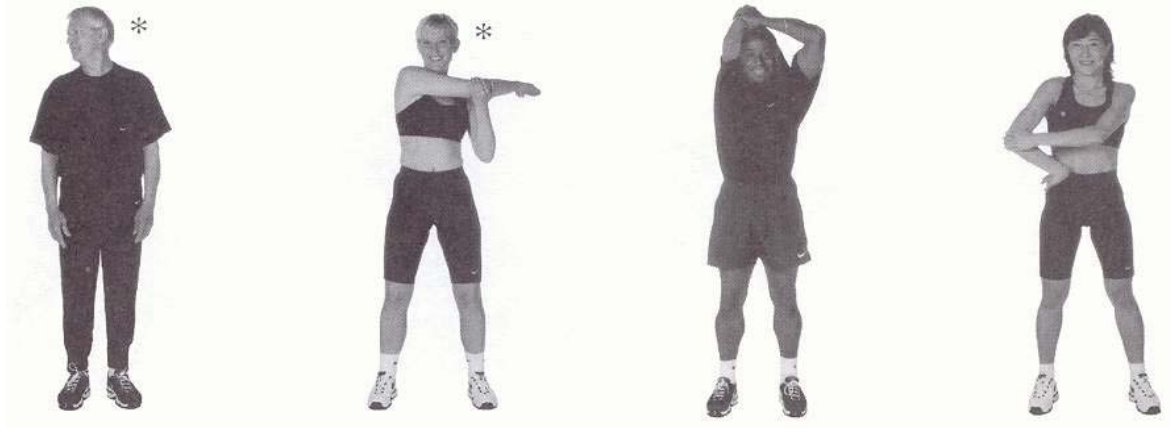
Warming-Up and Cooling-Down

Warming the body up prior to playing a round of golf or practicing on the driving range prepares the body both physically and mentally. Increased blood-flow to the muscles and joints, and improved flexibility with warming-up helps to improve performance. If that is not enough, it also reduces the potential for injury. It is a fallacy that simply hitting balls on a driving range and doing a few stretches adequately prepares a body for the rigors of a round of golf. In fact, we now know that stretching prior to engaging in a physical activity does NOT reduce the likelihood of injury! The better approach is to warm up first and then prepare the body to do the motions you require of it. Warming-up involves physical activity that raises the heart rate thereby increasing the blood flow to the various tissues of the body.

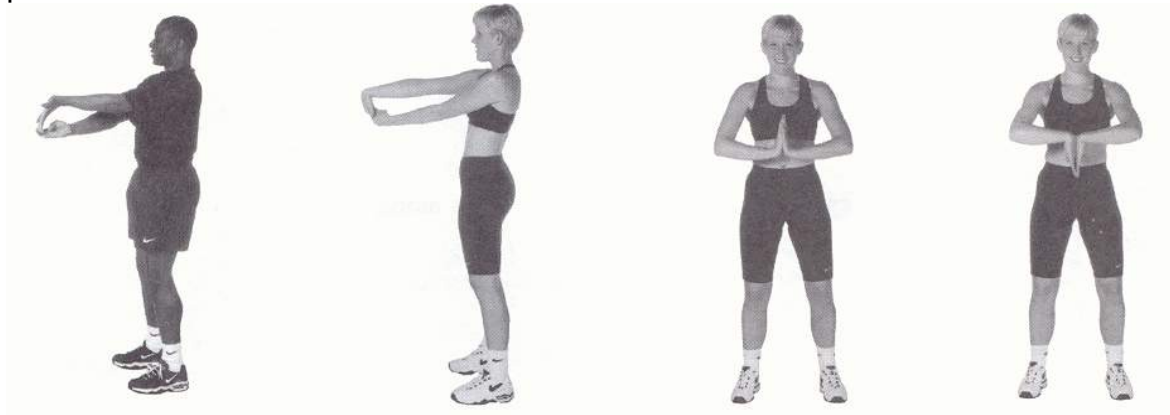


Allow yourself at least fifteen minutes to warm-up. Start with 5 – 10 minutes of climbing stairs, jogging on the spot, rigorous walking or any other activity that gets the heart rate up and the ‘blood flowing’. Once the body is ‘warm’, range of motion exercises may be commenced such as back bends, backward neck bends, side bends and upper body rotations. You are then ready to spend some time at the driving range to rehearse the swing portion of your game. Until you feel comfortable and loose, hit half shots with a short club (8 iron or shorter) and take time between shots to line up a target and focus on the easy swings.

Begin by concentrating on easy swinging, being mindful not to over-torque at either end of the swing. Gradually work up to full shots and then use longer clubs maintaining the same fluid motion with every club and every swing. Wearing a jacket or sweater on cooler days may seem like common sense, but it may prove beneficial to your game by keeping your muscles warmer and more pliable. Bear in mind that it is more difficult to injure a warm muscle than a cold one.



Muscles tend to tighten and build up wasteful chemicals after activity. Stretching as a cool-down helps restore the proper flexibility to the muscles and help remove the build-up of chemicals in the muscles. Furthermore, it will help to reduce the 'next day' soreness sometimes experienced after a round of golf or practice session.



Nutrition and Hydration

We often get enticed by the hotdog and soda after the ninth hole to fill the hunger gap. The best way to counteract this impulse is to be prepared. Bring a few snacks with you to put in your golf bag and bring water since you can lose as much as a litre of sweat, if not more, during a hot day on the golf course. A good rule of thumb is to drink water before, during, and after a round of golf.

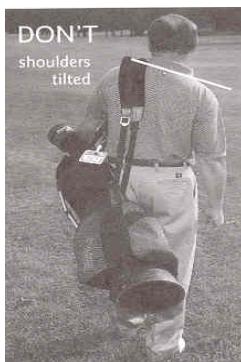


Golf Bags and Carts

Choose a manual cart over an electric golf cart. It is becoming commonplace with today's golf courses to offer electric carts to lug the golfer easily through the golf course. With so many people in today's society arguing that they cannot find the time to exercise, walking a golf course is just one of the ways to ensure a degree of physical activity in an otherwise busy day. It's interesting that we can find the time to golf but find it difficult to schedule time to exercise!

If you carry your clubs, use a two-strap system instead on the more common one-strap bags. Placing repetitive stress to one side of the body gives rise to overuse conditions and places more counterproductive mechanical stress to the body than should be exerted.

For those that feel most comfortable with the one-strap system, be sure to alternate the side you carry your golf bag on and always, walk upright. Not surprisingly, the average golf bag weighs 22 pounds!



Utilize a bag size that is appropriate for your body stature. Too often a golfer is seen carrying a bag that is too large and probably has 30 lbs. of non-essentials inside. Furthermore, it's a long way around a golf course so it is important to take frequent breaks when carrying a heavy bag. Don't wait for pain!

For those golfers that prefer the pull/push cart for their clubs, it is preferable to push the cart instead of pull it. Whether it is uphill, downhill or flat, players that push their clubs are better able to avoid twisting and gain increased control.



If using a motorized or electric golf cart, try to sit in an upright position. If you have back problems, consider using a full-back support or at least roll up a towel to support the normal curve of the low back.



Golfer's Feet

If not already required by the golf course played, changing to the new non-metal cleats is recommended. Non-metal cleats tend to provide more comfort during the long walk around the golf course without the loss of traction.



When golfing, you may be on your feet for four to five hours so comfortable shoes are a must. Be sure to break in new shoes before wearing them on the golf course and carry a back-up pair with you to change into when you do wear them for the first time on the golf course. Also, take a break and give your feet a rest. Take advantage of extra time on the tee box by grabbing a seat for a few minutes. If after following these suggestions, you still are experiencing foot and / or knee pain, a consultation with a health care professional regarding the appropriateness of orthotics may be in order.

The Elements



Sun can burn your skin, damage the retina of your eyes and contribute to cataracts. Prolonged exposure can also result in skin cancer. Always apply sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or greater. Apply prior to arriving at the golf course and reapply sunscreen throughout the day. Also, wear a hat, preferably with a brim and wear sunglasses. Ultraviolet protective sunglasses greatly reduce damage to the eyes.

Spending time outside on hot, humid days can cause heat stress. The first symptoms are headaches, dizziness, and weakness. If you develop any of these symptoms, loosen your clothing, rest in a cool area and drink plenty of water. Avoiding long periods of exposure to the sun during the most heat intensive periods of the day (11 a.m. and 4 p.m.) is a good precautionary measure. Using an umbrella, or seeking the shade of trees whenever possible, is also highly recommended.

If you can see lightning or hear thunder, you are already at risk of getting struck by lightning. In the United States, lightning is responsible for five to ten deaths per year and over 100 injuries on the golf course alone! Lightning normally strikes the tallest object in its range, and a person standing in the middle of an open field is a target. Golfers are advised to avoid being near high places, open fields, isolated trees and bodies of water. Don't take chances! Do not take refuge in your golf cart – head for the clubhouse.

Standing, Bending, Lifting & Retrieving

One of the worst habits not only at the golf course but in everyday life is poor lifting and 'picking up' habits. It would be a strange day indeed not to see the average golfer bending over to tee or retrieve a golf ball. Bending forward at the waist to pick up an object, lifting an object that is far away from your body, or twisting while you lift, are all poor practices. Remember to bend your knees maintaining the normal curve of your low back and crouch down to tee a ball or to retrieve it. Always avoid any twisting motions of your body when lifting.



When standing for long periods of time try to maintain an erect posture. Occasionally shifting your weight from one foot to the other allows a more even distribution of weight to the spine and the rest of your body.

For the health of your spine, a great habit to develop is the 'reverse swing'. Take the time when standing around to swing the club in a reverse direction. This helps to even out the body's muscle activity and maintains symmetry.

Have a Great Golf Season!