

## FIT FOR GOLF

By Simon Burley Physiotherapist

Simon Burley ' Physiotherapist and golfer' has last year, completed a screening of many of the coast's leading golfers. The aim of the screening was to identify and prevent injuries commonly associated with golf.

Golf has been experiencing a surge in participation, especially with younger player's discovering the game. It has been estimated that over 900 000 Australian's play golf at least once a year. As more people play with increasing frequency certain types of injury are becoming apparent.

The reported incidence of player injury in amateur golf is between 57% and 62% for both men and women. The back is the most commonly affected area with the wrist, elbow and shoulder also figuring highly.

Before beginning the screening it was expected that golf being a unilateral sport, (ie. always hitting in from one direction and body position.) would create imbalances between the left side and right side of the body. This was evident in changes in strength, muscle and joint flexibility.

Unequal development of muscle and unequal loading of joints repeatedly in the swing did set-up "patterns of tightness that overtime could lead to back injury.

This is particularly a problem if you are a bit older and there are signs of spinal joint wear and tear and weakness of the joint stabilising muscles. Imbalance was found particularly in those golfer's who played or practiced more than once a week.

A new exercise programme has been developed to help correct the asymmetry caused by the golf swing. I feel this should be part of every golfer's practice. Good technique is also vital for avoiding back injuries and there is no substitute for a golf pro's instruction.

For example, good technique at address requires flexion in the lumbar spine with slight left hip hitching (for right handers). During backswing the correct movement is vertebral rotation of about 100 degrees, but in some golfers there is additional left side bend and extension which is inappropriate. This could cause back pain.

Even a technically correct golf swing involving rotation of a flexed (slightly bent forward) lumbar spine, is , overtime a recipe for back pain and stiffness. All golfer's should do some form of back exercises to address flexibility and spinal support muscle strength.

For information regarding golf injury and video analysis, Jason Taylor and Simon Burley can be contacted at the Maroochydore Physiotherapy Centre on 54791777 or Buderim Physiotherapy Centre on 54769068.