

GOLF INJURY – THE UPPER LIMB

By Simon Burley Physiotherapist

In my last article I discussed the more common back injuries associated with golf and how to avoid them. In particular how certain technique problems and lack of flexibility can lead to injury.

After back injuries, Upper limb injuries are the most prevalent in golf.

The Shoulder

The shoulder is a Ball and Socket Joint which is shallow and supported by the rotator cuff muscle group. As we age, this joint can degenerate and the tendons of the rotator cuff muscle group can become inflamed, strained or tethered.

To play Golf

The healthy shoulder allows full range of movement in the back swing and Follow through. In addition good strength of specific muscle groups eg. Rotator Cuff, Pectorals major, and Latissimus Dorsi are required to gain good club head speed, co-ordination and stability at the shoulder joint.

Causes of Shoulder Injuries

- 1) Over repeating the same movements i.e. acceleration phase during follow through.
- 2) Underlying pathological injuries eg. work related injuries, tendonitis, calcification and arthritis.
- 3) Not stretching before, during or after playing golf.
- 4) Incorrect lifting and carrying of ones golf clubs in and out of the car and on the golf course.
- 5) Poor technique in the golf swing.
- 6) Golf club shafts too rigid (especially as one gets older)
- 7) Related shock through the arm during impact of the club head as it hit's the ground, (this effect maybe worsened during the winter months if the ground is hard.)

The Elbow

The elbow is a hinge joint. The most common injuries that golfers may suffer from are:

Tennis Elbow and **Golfers Elbow**. Contrary to popular belief, Tennis elbow is the more prevalent.

Golfer's Elbow

Occurs mainly on the inside of the right elbow of a right handed golfer and vice versa for those left-handed. It is equally prevalent in both male and female.

Common Causes

- 1) Caused by stress on the forearm and wrist flexors during the golf swing,
- 2) Overemphasising wrist release on contact with the ball,
- 3) Gripping the club too tightly or changing your grips without the Golf Professionals advice. This places increased shock through the elbow,
- 4) Poor technique, especially on excessive supination and pronation of the golf swing
- 5) Swinging the club too forcefully.

Tennis Elbow

Is felt with pain and tenderness occurring on the most outer point of the elbow. As symptoms worsen pain radiates down the forearm to the wrist and leads to an inability to play.

Common Causes

- 1) The thumbs and the index fingers squeezing more tightly on the club than little, ring and middle fingers,
- 2) Gripping the club too tightly, may be due to worn/wet grips or the grips not being thick enough, eg. arthritic golfers.
- 3) Club shafts being too rigid causing extra shock through the arms on impact with the ball,

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4) Incorrect "cock-up" of the right wrist and vice versa in the back swing especially whilst practicing chipping,

5) Poor technique,

6) Constant repetition of the same shots on hard ground or practice mats and also over repetition of golf drills.

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