

ON FITNESS

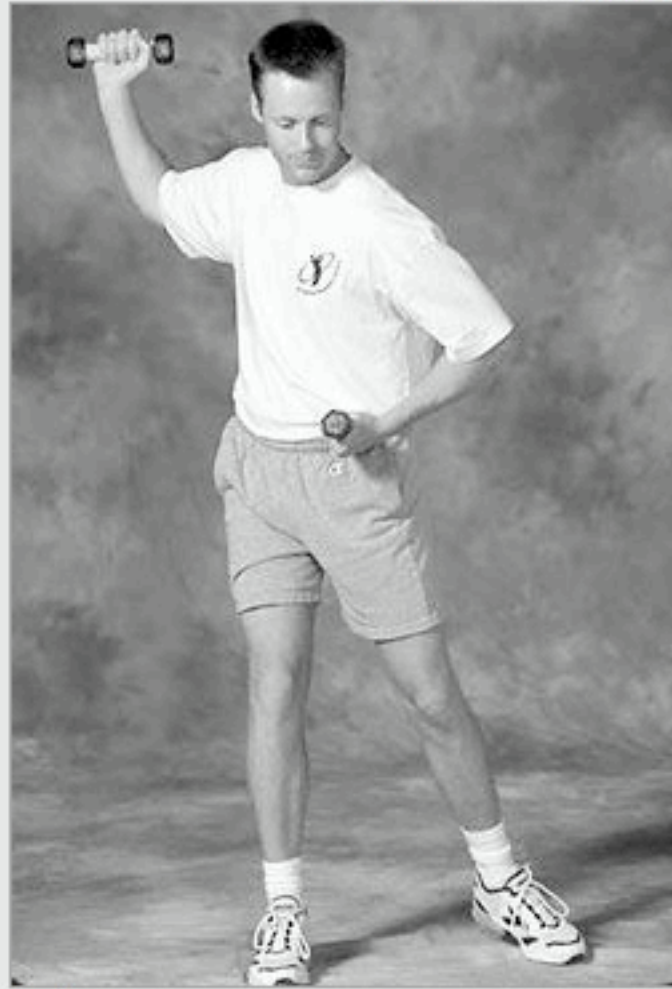
BY RICHARD SEVEN

E-mail article Print view

## Getting In The Swing

Before you hit the links, take time to study form and build strength

Information in this article, originally published June 17, 2005, was corrected June 21, 2005. Bellevue physical therapist Neil Chasan's name was misspelled in a previous version of this story.



enlarge

This exercise works the rotator cuff and leg muscles. Hold a light weight, between 3 and 5 pounds, in the position you would begin your back swing. Bring the weight back until you get to the top of your imaginary golf pivot. Keep posture correct and your trailing side (right side for a right-handed golfer) bearing the weight.

PREV | 1 of 3 | NEXT

THOSE WHO DON'T play golf dismiss it as too leisurely to be sport. Any form of exercise that can be tackled while wearing a Polo shirt and slacks is bound to get disrespect. The cute little electric cart that removes the walking doesn't help. Yet, to be good, you need solid hand-eye coordination, focus, form and at least a measure of endurance.

Golf has spurts of physical demands, too. The very act of striking the ball off the tee involves a violent torque that sets off a kinetic chain. That recruits the knees, hips, back and shoulders working as levers and pulleys.

Ironically, many injuries happen because duffers don't give their own sport enough respect.

Australian researchers recently observed 1,040 golfers (852 of them men) over three weeks in different venues, from country clubs to municipal courses. They found that almost half the golfers performed no warm-up. None. They simply gripped and ripped off the first tee. Only 3 percent of the sample warmed up adequately, paying attention to their shoulders, core and lower back.

Biomechanics determines balance, which is critical in all sports. The hips initiate, pulling the rest of the body through, making trunk rotation and flexibility critical not only for making a nice shot but for avoiding injury. The glutes and hip muscles generate power, and the rotator cuff, the four muscles surrounding each shoulder, bear much of the force.

If your hips don't rotate well, you transfer the stress of the swing to the spine.

Improper form is another leading reason for golf injuries. Golfers also typically suffer more injuries to the side of the body that leads the swing (the left for a right-handed player). The back and elbow are injured most often.

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons says elbow woes can be avoided, or at least reduced, by building strength in the forearm muscles. Squeeze a tennis ball, do light curls and reverse-curl exercises. Also, consider slowing the swing to reduce the shock at the point of impact. Most back injuries are muscle or ligament strains that improve with rest, anti-inflammatory medications such as aspirin or ibuprofen, and strengthening exercises. The rotational stress of a golf swing puts considerable pressure on the back and spine.

Changing technique and equipment can help golfers with chronic (long-term) back pain play around the injury. Everyone who golfs should take a lesson or two and stay within his or her ability. Don't try Tiger Woods' home-run swing. You'll never hit it like he does, so get over it.

### Save those elbows

Golfer's elbow is what doctors call that annoying sting that develops when you overuse or overload the point at which the muscles of the inner part of the forearm attach to the epicondyle of the upper arm. These are the muscles that flex the wrist.

How do you treat it? The bad news is: rest. Don't play golf for a while.

You can also use anti-inflammatory medications, ice or deep-tissue massage to treat it. And don't forget to stretch and strengthen the wrist and forearm muscles. Stretch bands or tubing are ideal for this.

You are also more likely to avoid injury by getting in shape and paying attention to those specific body parts that the sport demands. In the second edition of "Total Conditioning for Golfers," Bellevue physical therapist Neil Chasan discusses a comprehensive training program and urges strength and stretching.

Chasan also urges golfers to remember nutrition, especially the day they hit the links. For instance:

- Eat a light meal a few hours before you play, and be sure to include protein to help keep your blood-sugar levels up.

- Keep a fruit or two in your bag in case you need quick energy. Some professionals do this; some even eat sandwiches on the course.

- Come hydrated and stay that way, drinking a bit of water throughout the round. If it's a hot day, drink more and consider electrolyte-replacement drinks.

Richard Seven is a Pacific Northwest magazine staff writer. He can be reached at [rseven@seattletimes.com](mailto:rseven@seattletimes.com).

Go

Today  Archive   
Advanced search »

PACIFIC NW HOME

COVER STORY

PLANT LIFE

ON FITNESS

TASTE

NORTHWEST LIVING

PORTRAITS

NOW AND THEN

ADVERTISING

Less  
footwork.  
Better  
results.



Find the house that's  
right for you.

- agent listings
- new construction
- for-sale-by-owner

Go now ►  
**NWhomes**