



GOLF FITNESS MADE EASY!

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The biggest trend on the PGA and LPGA tours is not just in the bag, but also in the gym. Professional golfers now realize that the best method of performance enhancement and injury prevention is to start a golf fitness program. At the beginning of his career, the one key thing that Tiger did, that no other golfer at that time did, was follow a **scientifically designed, year-round strength, flexibility, and conditioning program.**

In his book, *The Egoscue Method of Healing In Motion*, Peter Egoscue writes, "Unless golf faces up to the indifference it has traditionally shown to the body and its proper functioning, the booming interest in golf won't last. The sport will be swamped in pain. Thirty and forty-year-olds who are now heading for the fairways in droves are the least functional generation who has ever teed up a golf ball. They bring dysfunction... by playing hour after hour, day after day, and this repetitive compensation motion injures them."

When it comes to golf fitness and golf injury prevention, the most important area is the core. The golf swing starts in the feet, the legs begin to generate power, and the core directs and amplifies this controlled power. During a controlled and powerful swing, the core must be strong enough to maintain this sequential transfer of momentum between the upper and lower body. The torquing motion of the golf swing puts tremendous stress on the lower back (lumbar spine) and the core also provides support and protection to this often-injured area.

What is the core? The core is made up of the muscle groups in the front ("abs"), the sides (obliques), the back (lower back muscles), the buttocks, and the hamstrings (rear thigh).

Abdominals



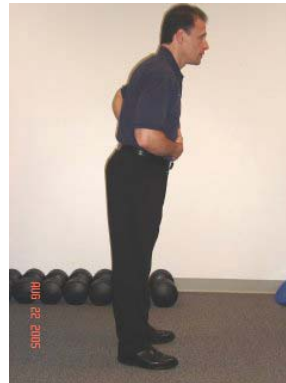
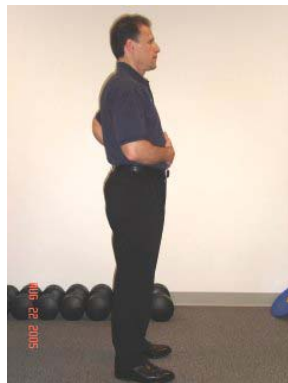
Obliques



Lower Back Muscles



Before you start a core exercise program, you must learn something called **abdominal bracing**. This contraction of your core muscles teaches you to use all your core muscles in a synchronous manner. It is what will protect your spine and improve your game. Take a look at the pictures below:



An abdominal brace occurs when you have contracted the abdominal muscles, lower back muscles, and buttock muscles at the same time. Here is how to do it:

1. Stand up straight and place one hand on the small of your back and one hand on your abdomen.
2. Bend forward at the waist and feel the lower back (extensor) muscles contract.
3. Come back to an upright posture and feel them “turn off.”
4. Without moving, contract the abdominal muscles (like you are about to get punched in your gut - feel them tighten with your hand) and feel the lower back muscles contract (with the other hand).
5. At the same time as you contract your abdominal muscles; add a contraction of the buttock muscles (as if you are holding in a bowel movement). This will supply even more stability to the spine. This is an abdominal brace – all the muscles around the torso contract to ensure stability.

6. Do not hold your breath during this maneuver. You must learn to brace your abdomen without a complete holding of your breath.

Now that you know how to perform the abdominal brace you can use it when performing any of the following exercises AND when you swing a golf club. The following is your winter core program. Start with Progression #1. Your goal is to be able to perform 3 sets of 60-second holds before moving to Progression #2.

Prone Plank

Progression #1: Off Knees

Elbows under shoulders, knees behind hips. Make sure your abs and glutes are tight when you hold this position. Start by holding for 15 seconds, rest for 30 seconds, and perform 3 sets.



Progression #2: Off Toes

Elbows under shoulders, on toes. Make sure your abs and glutes are tight when you hold this position. Start by holding for 15 seconds, rest for 30 seconds, and perform 3 sets.



Side Bridge

Progression #1: Off Knees

Lie on your side, knees bent to 90°, supported by elbow bent to 90°. Place the free hand on your opposite shoulder or leave it along your side. Keep torso straight and lift buttocks off the ground. Keep hips forward, squeeze buttocks and abs tight. Start by holding for 15 seconds, rest for 30 seconds, and perform 3 sets.



Progression #2: Off Toes

Lie on your side, supported by elbow bent to 90°. Same as above. Start by holding for 15 seconds, rest for 30 seconds, and perform 3 sets.



All Fours

Get on all fours, knees under hips and hands under shoulders. Squeeze your buttocks and abs. Reach forward with one arm to a horizontal position and hold for 5 seconds. Reach back with one leg to a horizontal position and hold for 5 seconds. Make your limbs “long” when you reach. Repeat with opposite arm and leg.



Once you can reach with a single limb and keep your torso stable, reach forward with the right arm and reach back with the left leg to a horizontal position. Hold for 10 seconds, rest for 20 seconds, and perform 3 sets.



Practice these exercises daily for the next two months and you will be amazed at how much better you feel and much your swing, accuracy, and distance will improve. Enjoy!

The best equipment you can invest in is yourself!

Disclaimer: The information presented on the pages of this article is intended as an educational resource and is not intended as a substitute for proper medical and/or training advice. Consult your physician or health care professional before performing any of the exercises described on these pages or any exercise technique or regimen, particularly if you are pregnant or nursing, or if you are elderly or have chronic or recurring medical conditions. Discontinue any exercise that causes you pain or severe discomfort and consult a medical expert. If you use the information in this article, or on any website to which this article is linked, you do so at your own risk. No program can prevent every injury, but research shows that this type of program is effective in significantly reducing that risk.