

GOLF FITNESS MADE EASY!

A Complete Golf Fitness and Injury Prevention Program

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INTRODUCTION

The sport of golf was forever changed late in the summer of 1996 when Tiger Woods made his professional debut. Since then, Tiger has won more tournaments and more prize money than any other active golfer. The thing that Tiger did, and that no other golfer at that time was doing, was to follow a **scientifically designed, year-round strength 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."

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. Now, this type of program is available to golfers of every level.

The golf swing is one of the most difficult and mentally and physically demanding skills in sports. It is a complex, single-sided, unnatural, torque-generating, ballistic movement. To perform it safely and successfully you must prepare your body.

THE GOLF SWING: ARE YOUR PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS HOLDING YOU BACK?

Questions for the golf student:

- Do you have trouble making the changes in your swing that your PGA/LPGA teaching professional suggests? Are you unable to put your body in the position suggested?

Questions for the PGA/LPGA teaching professional:

- Do your students have difficulty getting into the position you want them to be in or moving the way you want them to move regardless of your physical and verbal suggestions?

A golfer's posture, balance, strength, flexibility, and motor control all influence the swing motion for better or worse. The goal of this book is to help you correct the physical limitations that cause the faults in the swing. Coordinated instruction in golf fitness instruction and in the golf swing provided by your golf teaching professional will make a big difference in your golfing performance, playing satisfaction, and scoring.

Most golf-teaching professionals break the golf swing into five phases:

- Address Position
- Backswing
- Transition
- Downswing
- Impact and Follow-through

Each phase requires complex neuro-muscular coordination, strength, and flexibility to complete the swing in a fluid manner. The swing starts in the feet, with the legs generating the power, and the waist and hips directing this controlled power along the proper path. In order for the clubface to start in the proper position and to maintain proper position throughout the swing, the upper extremities must move with a torso that is directed by and in synch with the waist and hips. Peak muscle activity occurs in the muscles of the lower body before force generation is transferred to the core. The core must be strong to continue this sequential accumulation of momentum. Strength in the muscles of the upper back, chest, and shoulders permit greater acceleration of the club, while maintaining control through strong arms and forearms.

Address Position (more will be covered in the section on Posture)

This is where it all begins and like other elements of the golf swing you shouldn't work on correcting movements that come later until you've mastered what comes first. In his 2001 book *How Play Golf*, Tiger Woods wrote, "Golf is like any sport that requires movement. You need to be in an athletically ready position so you can respond to movement quickly, smoothly and without losing your balance. The key to good posture is matching up your torso and lower body, so one can react to the other throughout the swing."

Backswing

As the club moves to the top of the back swing, the neck and upper back (top of the spine) rotate toward the target to keep your head over the ball, while the shoulders and the rest of the spine rotate away from the target. This spinal torque puts tremendous pressure on the spinal discs and joints. For a right-handed golfer, at the top of the backswing, the left shoulder should be under the chin and the right hip should be rotated back about 45°. About 75% of your weight should be on the inside of your right foot. If you are unable to achieve sufficient spinal rotation, hip rotation, proper weight transfer, your swing and spine will suffer. [J Sports Sci. 1998 Feb;16(2):165-76]

Transition

The transition point of the swing begins when the lower body begins moving forward and the upper body is still "coiling" backward. The hips and pelvis initiate this change of direction first and are followed by the shoulders. This brief countermovement requires tremendous torso and core strength, stability, and flexibility. Studies show that professional golfers use less effort while performing the trunk coiling and uncoiling process. In other words, there is less "leakage" of

GOLF SPECIFIC STRENGTH TRAINING

A **stronger** body plays better golf. Playing golf at the highest level requires muscular strength, power, and endurance. Contrary to what you might think, hours and hours of hitting balls will not make you stronger or able to hit the ball farther. In fact, this method of training frequently amounts to a lot of frustration and a greater chance of injury.

Getting stronger does NOT mean getting bulkier. The National Strength and Conditioning Association defines strength training as "the use of progressive resistance methods to increase one's ability to exert or resist force." Nowhere does this definition mention the use of big weights. This is the worst thing you can do. **Golf strength training** will focus on improving neuromuscular control for better balance and increased power. The benefits of golf-specific strength training have been well documented. Golfers will significantly increase driving distance, lower handicaps, and reduce injuries.

A proper assessment BEFORE starting a strength training program is necessary. This assessment should determine which of your muscle groups are flexible and which are inflexible, which muscles are strong and which are weak and in what positions you have good balance and what positions you have poor balance. A program must be designed to correct these problem areas.

Many of our patients have complained that they have previously been injured during the first four to eight weeks of working out. This occurred because the aforementioned type of assessment was never performed. Once these physical deficiencies are corrected, a golf specific routine should be designed to take you to the next level.

The exercises in this book may look like exercises you have attempted before, HOWEVER, there are subtle differences. The difference has to do with how your mind and body communicate. The smart golfer who pays attention to the TECHNIQUE of each exercise will see the difference and start to make that mind-body connection. The same preparation, concentration and mental focus that you apply to your golf swing must be applied to each and every exercise movement. Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced programs are suggested after the list of exercises.

Before you start the exercise program, you must learn something called abdominal bracing as described below. This contraction of your core muscles is what will protect your spine and improve your game. Take a look at the pictures below:

GENERAL STRENGTH EXERCISES

All Fours



Get on all fours with knees under hips and hands under shoulders. Squeeze your buttocks and abs. Next, 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 your reach. Repeat with the 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. Repeat with the left arm and right leg. Hold for each position for 5 seconds, rest for 10 seconds, and perform 3 sets.

Ball Squat



Place ball against the wall and stand with your back to ball and half the ball below your belt and half above. Keep feet shoulder width apart. Toes are forward or pointed slightly outward. Look straight ahead and keep chest up. Lower to a comfortable depth keeping knees aligned over toes while lowering and rising up. Perform 10 repetitions.

GOLF-SPECIFIC STRENGTH EXERCISES (continued)

Tubing Full Backswing

Place tubing under the left foot. Hold handle. Start in the address position with normal golf grip and slight tension in the tubing. Turn your hips, torso, and shoulders to make a full backswing. Perform exercise in BOTH directions.



Tubing Drive

Close a door on the tubing at top of the door jam. Hold handle with normal golf grip. Start near the top of the backswing with slight tension on the tubing. Drive the arms down toward the ball with the butt of the “club” handle leading the way forward, ending at the point at which you would make contact with the ball. Perform in the exercise in BOTH directions.

