

Orthopaedic Connection

Let's Take a Swing at Golf Injuries

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Golf seems like a pretty low risk sport, right? Unless you get hit by someone else's ball, what could happen? A lot. Keep reading please.

I thought it would be worth taking a "swing" at some of the things that I deal with pertaining to golf.

I play golf myself so I have personal acquaintance with some of these problems not just professional experience. I'm no Tiger Woods, but if I spent as much time on my golf game as I do on Orthopaedic Surgery I hope I would play better.

I can see the rate of injuries increase as golf popularity rises.

Factoid. More than 80% of golf problems are related to overuse and only 20% are related to single trauma events.

Oh, by the way carrying a golf bag is hazardous to the lower back and shoulder. So unless you are 14, don't do that. It will make my job easier, if you use a pull cart or ride in a golf cart.

Golf Swing

The golf swing is a complicated activity requiring a synchronized effort of muscle strength, timing and coordination. That's why most of us are no good and are on the golf course only to learn humility and enjoy the outdoors. Professional golfers have problems related to overuse more than amateurs, as one might expect. The shoulders and elbows follow the back in number of injuries. The golf swing places the muscles of the lower back under large amounts of stress on every swing. If your back does not have the flexibility, muscular strength and endurance to execute the swing, injury will occur.

Back Exercises

Flexibility exercises are designed to increase range of motion of the lumbar spine. This will decrease the incidence of lower back pain. Back pain occurs also because the swing is putting stress on a

back that probably has some wear and tear arthritis changes whether you were aware of those changes or not.

Learning proper flexibility exercises helps increase trunk rotation. A physical therapist can be invaluable in setting up an exercise program. Since most back injuries take four to six weeks to resolve, doing some preventive exercises is time well spent.

Sore Shoulders

The lead shoulder or left shoulder in a right-handed golfer is usually affected the most. Similar to the back most of us have pre-existing changes in the shoulders. These tissue changes make it even more likely that there will be trouble ahead during the golf season.

Golfer's Elbow

Pain and inflammation on the inner aspect of the elbow is known as medial epicondylitis. It is thought to occur because of poor swing mechanics and of course it increases with age and frequency of play.

Injury Prevention and Treatment

Because we only have so much space each week I will continue this next week. I don't want to leave you with the impression that you are doomed. There is hope! There are things you can do regarding prevention and treatment. Please come back next week to learn the specifics.

Please log on to our office teaching website for patients and families. It has a wealth of information about musculoskeletal problems and injuries that I see and treat in the office and hospital. Go to www.orthopodsurgeon.com, which takes you to Your Orthopaedic Connection.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush

