



TAKE GOLF INJURIES SERIOUSLY

Golf doesn't hold the same kind of injury risk as high-impact sports such as football or hockey. But the repetitive motion and twisting of the spine can set the stage for potential injuries that may be underestimated for this low-impact lifetime sport.

Mike Markee, instructor of physical therapy and athletic training at Saint Louis University, has spent time on the senior PGA tour and developed exercise and fitness programs for golfers.

"It is possible to avoid injury and improve performance, especially through muscle strength and proper form," Markee said. "The great thing is that the same things that help you avoid injury also will improve your game."

It comes down to these 3 TIPS:

1. **Warm up and keep moving.** There can be a lot of down time in golf, so it takes deliberate focus to keep moving. Stretch before, during, and after the game. If you're able to walk and the course allows, skip the cart and get a few miles under your belt by the end of the game.
2. **Strengthen your core.** Golfers use the muscles closest to the spine, including hip and shoulder muscles. This is where the power comes from in your golf swing. A weakness in your core can lead to an unbalanced swing, with some muscles compensating for others. You can develop more power by training the right muscles. Now we know that strength training and flexibility aren't polar opposites and, in fact, core strength training can actually improve your performance.
3. **Develop good body mechanics.** Golf's main injury risk comes from the repeated motions of the swing. Working with a pro to learn to swing properly can help you reduce forces on the spine due to twisting and rotating and ensure that you aren't developing bad habits that can take their toll on your back, shoulder and elbow.

