

# Golf Injuries: Prevention & Treatment

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The average golfer typically plays approximately 40 rounds per year and spends many more days practicing, so it is not surprising that injuries occur during the golf season. Golf, however, is perceived as a low-risk sport. Other sports such as football, basketball or skiing have higher injury rates, but several studies show that golf has its share of injuries, too. One recent study showed that during a two year period, 60 percent of golf professionals and 40 percent of amateurs suffered either a traumatic or overuse injury while golfing. Over 80 percent of the reported injuries were related to overuse.

## TYPES OF GOLF INJURIES

Low back pain is the most common injury or complaint among both professional and amateur golfers, followed by injuries to the upper extremities (elbow and shoulder).

The elbow is the second most commonly injured area in golfers. The two most common problems are medial epicondylitis (golfer's or thrower's elbow) or lateral epicondylitis (tennis elbow). Both are thought to occur as a result of poor swing mechanics. Medial epicondylitis is thought to be caused by hitting shots

“fat” (that is, hitting the ground first), and lateral epicondylitis may be caused by over-swinging with the right hand in right-handed golfers.

Another commonly injured area in golfers is the shoulder. There are specific muscles in the shoulder that are most active in the swing. These are the subscapularis (one of the rotator cuff muscles), pectoralis (“Pecs”) and latissimus (“Lats”) muscles. Impingement syndrome (a bursitis and tendonitis in the shoulder), rotator cuff problems, and arthritis are the most common shoulder problems. These occur most frequently in the lead arm. A good warm-up routine and specific exercises that target the shoulder can help decrease the incidence of these injuries.

## INJURY PREVENTION

Warming up before golfing has been shown to decrease the incidence of golf injuries. One survey showed that over 80 percent of golfers spent less than ten minutes warming up before a round. Those who did warm up had less than half the incidence of injuries than those who did not warm up before playing. Lower handicap and professional golfers were more than twice as likely to warm up for more than ten minutes as compared to other golfers.

## INJURY TREATMENT

“Rest, ice, heat or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs should be the early form of treatment. Most symptoms resolve over a short period of time, but if symptoms persist or are severe at the onset, evaluation by a medical care provider should be sought. Braces that can allow continued play are available to help many painful areas and cortisone injections can be used in certain locations for pain relief. Surgical options are available if all non-operative options fail,” commented Dr. LeeBurton of Sanford Clinic Orthopedics & Sports Medicine.

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