

Golf and Your Health

By Dr. Gary Golembiewski, DC, FASBE

Your ability to move allows you to enjoy life and be everything you were meant to be. This movement is made possible by the bones, muscles and ligaments of your body. These tissues respond to the commands of your nervous system and allow you to walk, run, bend, lift, twist and do other normal body movements. The key structure that lets you move in so many different ways is the spinal column. Its 24 interlocking bones are designed to allow movement while protecting the vital nerve pathways of your spinal cord.

The relationship of the nervous system to the bones of the spine is critical to good health and a normal golf swing. Here's why. Your nervous system, consisting of the brain, spinal cord, nerve roots and all the nerves, controls the function of virtually every cell, tissue, organ and system of your body. If the nervous system malfunctions, the organs and tissues (including muscles and ligaments) controlled by the nerves also malfunction. And since the bones protecting the spinal cord are moveable, they are a common source of nervous system interference.

The golf swing is a unilateral athletic event. Your spine, with all of its deep muscles and ligaments, functions and moves one way during the golf swing. For example, all motion analysis in this article will refer to the right handed golfer. If you are a left handed golfer just reverse the explanations.



In the backswing your spine coils to the right side in a clockwise motion in a slow and deliberate manner. Muscle tension is produced in this phase of the swing. During the downswing when the most muscular effort and speed is generated, your deep intrinsic muscles (rotators, multifidus, psoas—to name a few) and ligaments are called upon to work more on one side. As the golfer goes into the full finish, the lumbar spine rotates to the right side (right hand golfers). Here is where damage can be done. You perform many swings to only one side in golf. These muscles and ligaments work ONE way when you play golf and they get a tremendous workout to ONE side only! With ALL the attention to one side an imbalance in your body can occur. Chiropractic has a new science called Applied Spinal Biomechanical Engineering (A.S.B.E.) that offers a remedy.

A board certified chiropractic doctor would, as part of your examination, take x-rays as you go

through normal ranges of motion. These films show you and your doctor how well the various areas of your spine are working and pinpoint any trouble spots. While some conditions may not cause pain or other obvious symptoms, they will cause nervous system interference and lead to progressive degeneration if left untreated.

The x-ray views of your spine and other examination findings tell your Doctor of Chiropractic where and how to adjust your spine to restore the normal motion and position of individual spinal bones. It also tells your doctor which muscles are not properly supporting the spine and allowing for normal movement.

While your spine can be adjusted to restore normal motion and position, the muscles and ligaments supporting your spine may have become accustomed to years of improper support. Often for golfers and other athletes, muscles on one side of the spine become strong, while those on the other side become weak. Chiropractic care is appropriate, but research suggests that this imbalance cannot be corrected by chiropractic adjustments alone.

That's where you come in. You can play a role in your own recovery by exercising specific muscle groups to overcome this muscle imbalance. When specific prescribed exercises recommended by your doctor are combined with chiropractic adjustments, your spine has its best chance to return to nor-

mal. Before and after x-ray views of patients, who have worked in partnership with their Doctor of Chiropractic, show how effective these specific exercises are in improving spinal functions. The exercises take just a few minutes a day, but will speed your recovery and help prevent your problem from returning. These exercises have such a profound effect that when subsequent x-rays views of your spine are taken it will be quite apparent how consistently you've done them.

We can't promise that this information will improve your golf game, but it will help any muscle imbalance and your overall health. Now, try the following self test and see how you fair, and remember...always hit them straight and long!



The body in imbalance. Note the short right leg, raised hip, and misalignment of the shoulders and head. Brain messages may be interrupted.



Diagrams courtesy of the author's web site

When body balance is restored and the brain can communicate with all parts of the body, the natural ability to regain and maintain health is at its optimal level. One of the Chiropractic Doctor's objectives is to help the patient maintain body balance so he or she can live pain free and enjoy a better quality of life.

Self test for low back weakness

Developed by the author and the ASBE

In all the exercises hold the designated procedure for 20 seconds. Repeat the procedure on the opposite side for the same amount of time. In the normal, healthy spine both sides will function without muscle spasm or weakness. **If you feel pain, experience dizziness, nausea or any other symptom, STOP immediately.**

Test 1&2. Left and right lumbar lateral flexion maneuver. Stand with your back against a wall with feet shoulder-width apart. Bend at waist as far as you can to left. Keep head, shoulders and buttocks against the wall throughout maneuver. Don't let right foot leave the ground. Don't let hips sway to the right. Hold position for 20 seconds. Repeat bending to the right.

Test 3&4. Left and right lateral lumbar flexion combined with left forward hip rotation. Step 1: stand against a wall with feet shoulder-width apart. Bend to the left at the waist as far as you can. Keep head, shoulders and right buttock against the wall throughout the maneuver. Step 2: now rotate left hip forward as far as you can.

Make sure shoulders stay against the wall throughout the maneuver. Repeat entire exercise for the right side.

Test 5&6. Left and right lying down hip drop maneuver stretch. Step 1: lie down on your back on a firm surface with arms at your side and both legs straight. Step 2: point the toes of left foot toward your head and relax left leg. Step 3: concentrate on moving left hip downward. Your entire relaxed leg and foot will move inches further than the opposite foot. Relax right hip, as all muscle action occurs on the left side. Hold for 20 seconds and then repeat all steps using the right leg and hip.

Dr. Gary Golembiewski was trained by John Parrillo. He was a national place winner in Power Lifting and was a medallist in Olympic and Bodybuilding. For information on a board certified fellow in Applied Spinal Biomechanical Engineering(A.S.B.E.) call the office at 201-476-9191. Or visit his web site at www.drgaryg.com