

# HEALTHY LIVING



## Preparing Fore(!) Golf

After shutting down in the spring due to COVID-19, many golf courses have since reopened to a boom in activity. It is easy to understand why: golf is an outdoor sport where social distancing comes fairly easy. However, the usual “traps” remain: many avid golfers contort their bodies into oddly twisted postures, generating a great deal of torque. Couple this motion with a bent-over stance, repeat 120 times over three or four hours, add the fatigue that comes with several miles of walking, and you’ve got a good workout—and a recipe for potential low back trouble. The American Chiropractic Association (ACA) suggests the simple measures below to help you avoid back pain or injury:

### Purchase the Right Equipment

- Purchase equipment that fits. Don’t try to adapt your swing to the wrong clubs: Someone who is six feet tall playing with irons designed for someone five inches shorter is begging for back trouble. You may have been given an old set of “starter” clubs by someone, but unless their frame is similar to yours it might not be worth the risk of injury.
- For senior golfers: If you show some signs of arthritis in the hands, consider a larger, more specialized grip for added safety and performance.
- For some, scores may not be as important as enjoying the social benefits of the game. Having clubs that are comfortable will increase the chances of playing for a long time without significant physical limitations.

### Prepare Your Body

- Take lessons. Learning proper swing technique is critical. At the end of the swing, you want to be standing up straight. The back should not be twisted.
- Choose soft shoes or soft spikes, which allow for greater motion. Old golf shoes with metal spikes were not only harder to walk in and tore up the greens, but also increased stress on the back.
- Warm up before each round. Take a brisk walk to get blood flowing to the muscles, then do a set of stretches. To set up a stretching and/or exercise routine, see a doctor of chiropractic or golf pro who can evaluate what will work best for you.

### Make Good Choices

- Pull, do not carry, your golf bag. Carrying a heavy bag for 18 holes can cause the spine to shrink, leading to disk problems and nerve irritation. If you prefer to ride in a cart, alternate riding and walking every other hole, as bouncing around in a cart can also be hard on the spine.
- Keep your entire body involved. Every third hole take a few practice swings with the opposite hand to keep your muscles balanced and even out stress on the back.
- Drink lots of water. Dehydration causes early fatigue, leading you to compensate by adjusting your swing, thus increasing the risk of injury. Do not smoke or drink alcoholic beverages while golfing, as both cause loss of fluid.
- Take the “drop.” One bad swing—striking a root or a rock with your club—can damage a wrist. If you’re unsure whether you can get a clean swing, take the drop.

**For more information on prevention and wellness, or to find an ACA chiropractor near you, visit [www.HandsDownBetter.org](http://www.HandsDownBetter.org)**



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