

## **Chapter 9 - LOOKING AFTER THE GOLFER'S BODY**

It is important that the golfer develops good habits when it comes to looking after themselves physically. This will allow them to get the most out of their body when competing. Good habits established early will be easy to continue as they continue on their golf careers.

Establishing good habits when it comes to taking care of their body will not only help to improve a golfer's performance, but also prevent injury and prolong their golf career. With the chance to play competitive golf into their 40's, 50's and even 60's, this has extra significance.

### ***Load and the Developing Body***

Young golfers have less tolerance for the high, repetitive loads that are generated during the golf swing. Due to an immature skeletal system and a developing muscular system not yet able to absorb these loads, the risk of injury is higher than in adults under similar conditions.

There are 3 ways that a golfer, or any athlete, may injure themselves.

1. High Load - Low Frequency, ie a single traumatic incident eg hit a tree root and injure the wrist
2. Moderate Load - High Frequency ie chronic overload due to poor technique, eg reverse spine angle leading to low back pain
3. Low Load - High Frequency ie too much of the same movement, eg hitting hundreds of golf balls leading to elbow pain

Because of their reduced tolerance for absorbing repetitive loads, much care needs to be taken to structure training and practice in order to protect the young golfer from injury from the second two causes of injury.

The following suggestions are practical guidelines that can be implemented to minimize the risk of injury in junior golfers:

- limit the number of balls hit per session, for example 60 full shots
- for every number of full shots hit, make a set number of reverse swings, for example, for every 30 full shots a right hander hits, they must make 15 left handed swings
- break up practice sessions with exercises designed to help reduce the load through the body, for example posture breaks
- after any lay off from golf, gradually return to practice with a predetermined plan, rather than starting with a long practice session

It is also important that the junior golfer develops good habits with regard to warming up and recovery as discussed in the following pages to help reverse the effects of practicing and training, as well as preparing appropriately for any practice or training sessions.

## ***Warming Up***

Warming up is often talked about but rarely done well. Most golfers tend to go through the motions to tick the box that they have done a warm up, or it is done with great enthusiasm but is poorly composed.

Warming up has several benefits, but the most important purpose of warming up is to get the golfer ready to hit the best tee shot they can off the first tee, then continue through the round. Warming up should be done *before the golfer swings a club*. Too often I see golfers get to the course first thing in the morning after just getting up, or after a long car ride, and head straight to the range to warm up. They grab a wedge for their bag and hit a few half shots and go from there. The problem is that because they are ill prepared, their body is stiff, tight, unresponsive and lethargic. What happens is that the golfer starts with some “armsy” swings, as that is the best they can hope for with their body in the state that it is. What they do not realise is that they are grooving the pattern for the day. Before they know it they are now hitting 5 irons with the same “armsy” swing and cannot work out why they are hitting the ball so poorly. The problem, of course, is that what they took as a warm up, a few half wedges, is in fact rehearsal for what their day is going to be!

There are several concepts regarding warming up that are mistaken. The most common warm up mistake is swinging two or three clubs. The idea is that by swinging three clubs, the heavier load will fire up the muscles and get you ready to play. The reality is that the heavier load will alter your swing pattern in order to actually move it, and thus most likely change what your actual swing will look like. It also has an effect on the nervous system that affects timing and efficiency. There is actually research to show this very fact, with a golfer making more off center hits after swinging multiple clubs and as a result hitting the ball shorter. The golfer who swings several clubs at once is also more at risk of sustaining an injury.

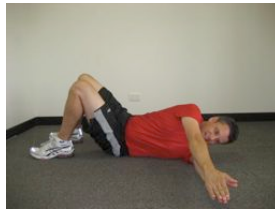
The second most common mistake is that warming up is stretching only. While stretching can be part of a warm up routine, warming up needs to be dynamic, after all, you need to move to swing a golf club, therefore you need to move to warm up correctly. If you watch athletes in any other sport, AFL, Rugby, Soccer or Basketball, their warm up routine is active, dynamic and often somewhat physical. Warming up for golf should be no different. Stretching can be part of the warm up routine, but should be done at home or hotel if you have a short trip to the course, or first thing when you get to the course prior to more dynamic activity.

There is no one perfect way to warm up, and each individual needs to find what works best for them. The warm up should include activities that include squatting or lunging, rotation, especially of the upper body, weight transfer, and activities to activate the muscles of the shoulder and shoulder blade. Following are examples of 2 different warm up routines which meet these criteria, and can be done in a short period of time, either out on the range or in the locker room.

**Warm-Up Routine:  
Example 1**

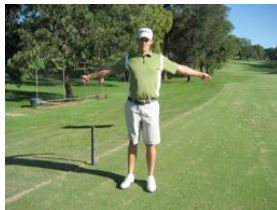
**Trunk Rotation**

The golfer lays on their back with feet resting flat on the ground. Keeping their legs relaxed, fingertips together and elbows straight, they rotate their trunk side-to-side. The golfer must keep the triangle between their arms and chest constant the whole time.  
Repeat 10 reps



**Shoulders**

The golfer starts with 5 arm swings in both directions in a comfortable range, starting small and slowly getting bigger, not allowing their hands to move behind their shoulders.



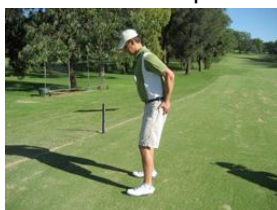
Next, the golfer places 1 hand on top of the other to the side of their body, palms down, presses together and holds for 3 seconds, swap hand positions and repeat, they then position their hands vertically and repeat the process. Then repeat the entire process on the other side of their body.



Next, the golfer positions their dominant hand in front of their chest, palm facing forward with fingers hooked into the fingers of the other hand. They squeeze their shoulder blades together and pull their fingers apart as hard as possible for 3 seconds. Maintaining the hold, they roll their hands forward and backward, then roll their elbows forward and backwards, 5 times each. Then repeat with fingers pushing against each other.



The golfer finishes with hands on their buttocks and squeezes shoulder blades together, pushing their hands into their buttocks as hard as possible for 5 seconds



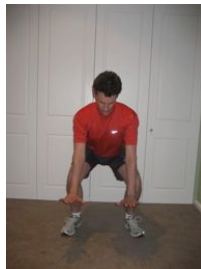
### **Lunge with Rotation**

The golfer holds a club overhead and lunges forward, rotating into the forward leg, 3 times each side. They then repeat, stepping backwards, each time rotating away from the back leg, 3 times each side.



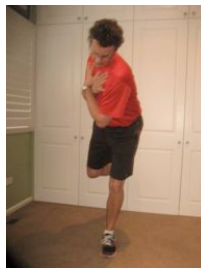
### **Squatting Backswing Drill**

The golfer starts in Golf Posture and squats down, maintaining their spine angle. Keeping their arms straight and wrists extended, thumbs together, they turn into their backswing position, keeping their thumbs together the whole time. Repeat 6 times.



### **Single Leg Golf Posture Balance with Rotation**

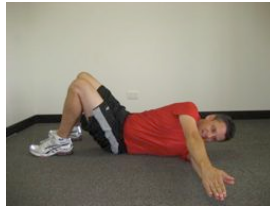
The golfer stands on 1 leg in golf posture with their arms across their chest. Maintaining their balance the golfer rotates side-to-side, 5 times in each direction.



**Warm-Up Routine:**  
**Example 2**

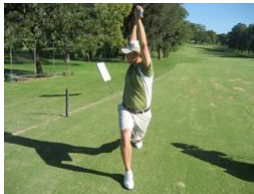
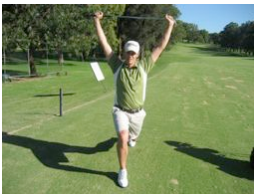
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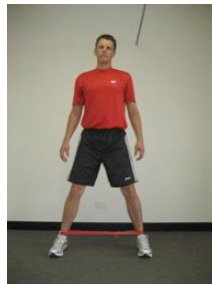
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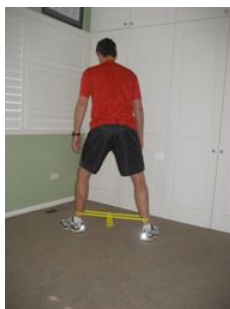
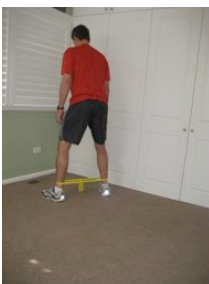
**Theraband Side-Step**

With theraband around their ankles, the golfer side-steps 8 steps to the right, maintaining the tension in the band the whole time, then return to the left for 8 steps.



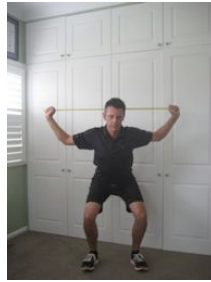
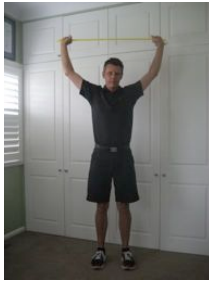
**Monster Walks - Backwards**

The golfer stands with theraband around their ankle, feet shoulder width apart. Moving their feet out and around, the golfer walks backwards for 8 steps each leg.



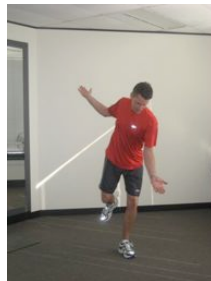
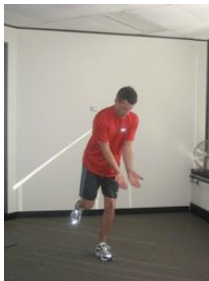
### **Squat with Pull Down**

Holding theraband above their head, the golfer pulls the theraband down as they squat down at the same time. Repeat 10 times



### **Single Leg Golf Posture Windmills**

The golfer stands in golf posture on 1 leg, hands held together in front of them with palms facing up. Maintaining their balance and posture, they rotate one arm behind them, rotating their body and leaving the other hand in place. Repeat 6 times each way on each leg



## **Recovery**

An often overlooked, yet very important aspect of physical preparation and management, is recovery after activity. The goal of recovery is to return the golfer's body to its pre-activity state as soon as possible.

Recovery is actually more important than warming up for injury prevention, as well as allowing the golfer to perform at optimal levels. It becomes even more important for golfers during multi round events and while travelling, after all, the trophies are handed out after the final round, not the first. A golfer standing on the final tee of a multi round event, with a chance to win, knowing that they have done everything right in their physical preparation to get them to this point, must have more confidence than an opponent who is feeling tired and lethargic due to a lack of preparation.

Recovery should start as soon as the previous round, or exercise session, has finished, and is aimed at getting the golfer ready for the next round or workout. Recovery can include many different aspects, and sometimes may depend on the available facilities. The golfer therefore must have multiple recovery strategies in place depending on where they find themselves.

The goal of any recovery program is to reverse the unwanted side effects of activity. These include muscle tightness and sometimes soreness, build up of waste products such as lactic acid, and even factors such as dehydration and energy loss, especially in hot environments.

Recovery can utilise different measures, such as massage, stretching, light activity, and nutritional aspects such as fluid replacement and which foods are eaten post activity. As golf is not a team sport, the golfer needs to be responsible for their own recovery, especially when travelling, and therefore needs to plan for this in advance, which may mean taking implements to assist with recovery and scouting out available facilities at the destination.

### **Examples of Recovery Strategies**

#### **1. Stretching**

Stretching post round is a great recovery strategy, and can be both static and dynamic. For best results, the golfer needs to perform stretches that cover all parts of the body, with special attention paid to areas of their body that are prone to tightness. The following stretches would be a good example of a comprehensive generic post round stretching routine. Each stretch should be held, or continued, for 45 seconds. For more detail refer to the chapter on flexibility.

#### **Hamstrings**



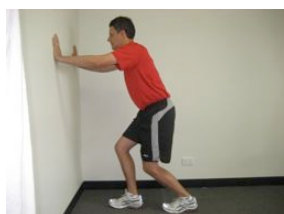
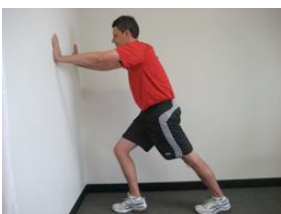
#### **Gluteals**



#### **Hip Flexors/Side**



#### **Calves - Straight and bent Leg**



#### **Upper Back - Bow and Arrow**



## 2. Self Massage

Self massage is a very effective way to release tight muscles that commonly develop after golf or activity. This can be a very important strategy when playing in multi round events and travelling. Long plane or car trips will cause postural changes that result in muscle tightness which predispose the golfer to injury, as well as also influence technique. Various tools can be used to assist with self massage and allow the golfer to perform their own muscles.

### Spikey Balls

Spikey massage balls have been made popular by Physiotherapist Ramsay McMaster and are an excellent way to perform self massage. Below are common methods that can be used with spikey balls, although the scope of their use is limited only by the imagination. It is important, for the drills to be effective, that when using spikey balls the golfer should feel some discomfort, although they should stop and consult a health care professional if they experience any pain. The golfer should spend a few minutes on each drill, with extra time spent in areas that seem tighter or more tender.



#### A. Gluteal Spikey Ball Release

The golfer crosses 1 leg over the other and takes their weight partially through both hands. Placing the spikey ball under the buttock of the crossed leg, the golfer rolls around until they find a tender area. ands.

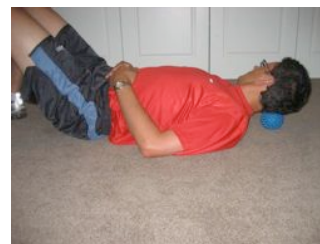


#### B. Front of Hip Spikey Ball Release

Laying on their side, the golfer rolls 30°-45° forward and places the spikey ball below and slightly to the outside of their pelvic bone. The golfer rolls around until they find a tender spot and stay in this area

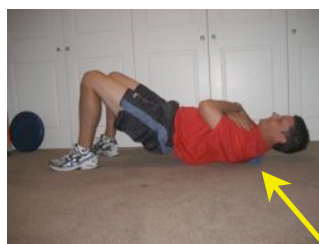
#### C. Spikey Ball Neck Release

Laying on their back on a firm surface, the golfer places the spikey ball under the base of their skull. Tucking their chin in, the golfer squeezes the spikey ball and stretches the upper neck muscles. Hold 10 seconds and repeat. Next, the golfer rotates their head side-to-side.



#### D. Upper Shoulder Spikey Ball Release

Placing the spikey ball at base of their neck in the upper shoulder (trapezius) muscle, the golfer lifts their hips up to place pressure down through the ball. Keeping the pressure on the ball, the golfer rolls up and down on the ball.







### E. Back of Shoulder Spikey Ball Release

With their arm over their head and leaning up against a wall, the golfer places the spikey ball in the back of their shoulder. Leaning into the spikey ball, the golfer rolls around until they find a tender spot and maintain the pressure in this area.



### F. Calf Muscle Spikey Ball Release

Placing spikey ball on a phone book/small box, the golfer rests their calf on the ball and moves the ball around until they find a tender/thickened area. Bounce around and massage this area, the golfer can also pump their foot up and down

## Foam Rollers

Foam rollers are excellent tools that can help with self massage and recovery. They are more effective on larger muscle groups, such as the hamstrings, quads, latissimus muscles along the side of the trunk, as well as loosening tightness through the upper back. Again, the golfer should feel some discomfort for the foam roller massage to be effective, although it should not cause any pain. Below are several examples of how to use the foam roller, however the scope of it's use is almost limitless. The golfer should spend a few minutes on each drill, and spend extra time on those areas that are more uncomfortable or tighter.

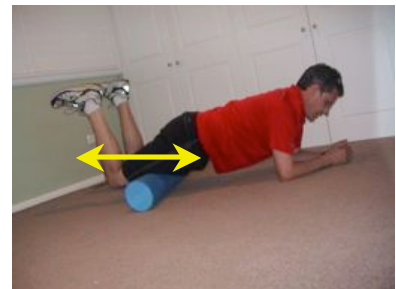
### A. Hamstring Foam Roller Release

The golfer sits with legs out straight, hands resting on the ground behind them. The golfer places the foam roller under their hamstrings, pushes up to take their weight through their hands and rolls up and down. tilting their body side-to-side to place more pressure through each leg.



### B. Quadricep Foam Roller Release

The golfer lays face down, weight through elbows and places a foam roller under their thighs. The golfer rolls up and down to massage the front of the thighs.



### C. Lateral Thigh Foam Roller Release

The golfer lays on their side with their weight through their elbow. The golfer places a foam roller under the outside of their thigh and rolls up and down to massage the outside of their thigh. This can be quite uncomfortable, however the golfer should persist if able as the results are often quite good.



#### **D. Latissimus/Lateral Trunk Foam Roller Release**

The golfer lays on their side with their arm above their head, foam roller resting against the under side of the shoulder. The golfer rolls up and down to massage the of the body.



#### **E. Foam Roller Upper Back Release**

The golfer lays on their back supporting their neck with their hands and a foam roller under their upper back. The golfer leans back over the roller and raises their hips, then rolls up and down on the roller to release their upper back.



### **3. Pool Sessions**

Pool sessions are a wonderful way to recover following activity, especially in hot weather, even if the golfer is not a confident swimmer. Walking in waist to chest deep water is very effective way to promote recovery of leg and hip muscles. The golfer should walk forwards, backwards, and side ways, as well as lunge walking forwards and backwards. If confident, swimming is also a great way to recover in the pool. The golfer can alternate between freestyle and breast stroke to get maximum effect.

### **4. Hot Cold Showers**

Hot cold showers are very effective at flushing the waste products of activity, such as lactic acid, out of muscles and reducing soreness that can be experienced following prolonged or intense activity. The golfer should stand under a warm shower for 2 minutes, then turn the heat down until the shower is quite cool and stand under this for 2 minutes. The golfer should repeat this cycle 3 times.

### **5. Nutritional Recovery**

Nutrition and fluid replacement is a very important part of recovery. The golfer should be replacing fluid throughout the round and during any activity, although it is also important to continue doing this after the round, especially in hot weather. The golfer should also replace energy stores that have been burned during any activity, including golf. Carbohydrate rich foods are best to do this, such as fruit, sandwiches, pasta and muffins.

***\* A good way to check if the golfer has replaced fluids and energy stores sufficiently is by body weight. If possible, the golfer should weigh themselves before and after their round. If they have lost weight during the round, they should continue to drink and eat as described until they have returned to their pre-round weight.***