

Golf Guide



Golf and Your Health

Golf promotes physical fitness while also improving your mental well-being.

Doctors agree: Trying for birdies and avoiding the rough is good for your health. That's because you're taking part in increased cardiovascular activity, while reaping the emotional rewards of social interaction and an improved mood. Here's a look:

CARDIOVASCULAR BENEFITS

Walking the course instead of using a cart can lead to many health advantages. Research indicates that brisk walking can reduce risks associated with high cholesterol, diabetes and hypertension. Simply walking three 18-hole rounds each week has been shown to provide enough exercise to help golfers of any age maintain a healthy weight. So incorporate regular rounds of golf into your regular fitness regimen.

ENHANCED MOOD

Research on golf and mental health is limited, but the National Institutes of Health has repeatedly linked physical activity with improved mental well-being. Research shows that exercise contributes positively to both short-term and long-term mental health. And whose mood wouldn't brighten as they notice improvements in your weight, diabetes management and



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blood pressure?

NEW CONNECTIONS

Enjoying a round of golf alone can be a tranquil, refreshing experience, as you make a reconnection with nature. At the same time, however, there are significant health advantages associated with playing in a social environment. The National

Institutes of Health reports that social interactions have a positive effect on psychological and behavioral health.

So, take the opportunity to spend time with friends who share your passion for golf. If you're not already surrounded by a group of like-minded individuals, consider participating in scrambles or charity tournaments where others are

already gathered. You can enjoy the sport you love while improving your overall well-being.

HOW MANY CALORIES?

The typical 18-hole golf course is comparable to a 5-mile walk, and that can help golfers achieve the daily target of 10,000 steps recommended by healthcare professionals.

Research findings reveal that riding in a cart during an 18-hole game burns approximately 1,300 calories, while carrying your clubs can increase that number by an average of 700 calories per round. The energy expended while playing nine holes is estimated to be similar to mowing the lawn for approximately 40 minutes.

Overcoming Bad Putting

Hitting that incredible drive will mean little if you can't get the ball into the cup.

Among the most recommended ways to improve your putting is making a better assessment of the green, adjusting your stance and grip, and generating a newfound focus on your stance. Correct these little things and your ability to sink a putt might quickly become a very big deal.

THE GREEN

The angles and slopes of greens on courses were designed to confuse golfers — and it works like a charm! Research has indicated that golfers misjudge more than 65 percent of their putts. How to fix it? Begin by examining the layout of the green as soon as your ball comes to rest. Establish a consistent routine and stick with it. If necessary, take a moment to measure the distance by pacing it out. Change your vantage point by observing the shot from behind the hole.

YOUR GRIP

Effective control on the greens begins with your grip. Experiment with various grip styles until you discover one that solves your putting issues. Regardless of your choice, make sure that both hands are applying equal pressure on the putter, since a dominant

hand can influence both trajectory and speed. After that, remember to relax. Loosen your grip at the hands, but also in your arms and shoulders.

YOUR STANCE

After relaxing your grip, move forward and backward until you establish a perfect vertical alignment over the ball. If your feet are positioned too far apart or too narrowly, you may have challenges with balance. Once aligned, position your feet as consistently as possible to replicate your stance. For an effective putting stroke, lean slightly toward your toes instead of leaning back on your heels. Eventually, this will become a comfortable, successful stance. Make a mental note to remember it.

YOUR FOCUS

Successful putting demands that your body remains completely still. Even the slightest movement can significantly affect your performance. If you are not centered or lack stability, your putting technique will continue to suffer. Focus intently on the spot where the putter will strike the ball. That will help maintain your steadiness.



Playing the Right Way

There are rules in place for golf, of course, but also plenty of unwritten ones.

Traditional courtesies and unwritten norms help complete the golf tradition. So it's best to understand proper course etiquette before you hit the links.

RESPECT THE COURSE

Remember that the course is a shared experience. Repair any ball marks with a specialized two-pronged tool, a penknife or a tee. Divots can typically be fixed by reinserting the displaced grass. Some dedicated golfers carry a seed mix in their bag to fill in larger divots. Always rake the bunkers. If you're using a cart, avoid wet areas to minimize any visible signs of your presence. When in a group, spread out your carts instead of following closely behind one another to reduce wear and tear on the fairways.

MANAGING EMOTIONS

Everyone gets angry when they make a bad shot or miss an easy putt. But using inappropriate language or throwing your clubs can disrupt the game for everyone who's nearby. You're going to face a fair share of frustrations on the course — that's simply part of the sport. So try exploring more subtle methods of expressing displeasure. After a disappointing hole, you might



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consider hitting a more powerful tee shot. Being courteous also includes remaining still while other players prepare to take their shot. Position yourself opposite the next player or on a diagonal angle. Keep still until their ball is in the air. Be

careful to stay out of everyone's line of play.

AVOID SLOW PLAY

Avoid distractions like deep conversations, texting or social media use when your turn is next. This is one of the most common disruptions to the

flow of the game. Some golfers have even begun playing so-called "ready golf," meaning anyone who is ready hits their ball next — regardless of turns. Walk or drive at a reasonable pace. If you've lost your ball in the water or rough, limit your search to a maximum of five

minutes. The decision-making process for your next shot should take no longer than 45 seconds. If you find yourself unprepared, allow someone else in your group to take their shot first. If the pace is lagging for everyone, invite those behind you to play through.

Accent on Endurance

It's not high-impact like football or boxing, but golf still makes serious demands on our bodies.

The conventional wisdom on how much — or how little — training is needed in golf has evolved a lot over time. Historically, most golfers believed that endurance-focused exercises were not needed to achieve success on the course, regardless of their skill level.

But contemporary golfers, whether amateurs or seasoned professionals, are increasingly focused on building up their leg strength and cardiovascular system through regular training exercises. It makes sense: If you want to successfully navigate a full round of 18 holes, you'll need to have a strong sense of endurance.

WHY TRAIN?

Golfers have been incorporating weight training and physical conditioning into the sport to generate more power across a broad range of motion. There's a considerable amount of walking involved in the game. Rather than aiming for traditional muscle bulk, improve your endurance and your ball-striking capabilities. Get together with a local golf professional and establish a tailored workout routine. You're sure to see noticeable improvements in your performance.

MORE TARGETED

Any specialized regimen

should improve key physical functions such as posture, balance and core strength. Which one matters most to you will depend on the areas of your game that you hope to improve. Are you finding yourself fatigued during a round of golf? Are your shots starting to lose distance and consistency as the game progresses? It may be time to incorporate more leg exercises and cardiovascular training into your exercise regimen. Squats serve as an excellent full-body exercise that can bolster your leg strength while improving balance. If you want a more powerful swing, consider integrating cable exercises into your routine.

REDUCING INJURY

Research indicates that a well-structured physical training program can significantly lower the risk of injury for golfers at all levels, from juniors to professionals and seniors. Having fewer injuries will translate to a more enjoyable time spent on the course — and it will likely improve your scores, too. The more you exert yourself while playing golf, the greater the need for flexibility and durability. If you are not actively engaging in exercises that target these areas, you may be increasing your risk of injury.



The Game: Spice Things Up

Most golf outings mimic tournament action, with match or stroke play. Why try something different?

In match and stroke play, competitors aim to reach the hole with the fewest strokes while minimizing penalties from water hazards and out-of-bounds shots. But there are other games within the game to be played, each offering cool little twists on golf. Here's a look:

SCRAMBLE

The scramble format accelerates the pace of play when playing with a larger group, while motivating everyone to try their very best with each swing. Teams consisting of two, three, or four golfers take a shot on the first swing. After all players have taken their turn, the team selects the ball that is in the best position for the next shot. This process continues until the hole is completed. Tournaments may even permit players to place their ball within one club length of the selected position. Scoring is usually based on stroke play, with the lowest total score at the end of the round determining the winner.

FOUR BALL

Four Ball can be played as either stroke or match play. In match play, the team with the lowest score on each hole wins. In stroke play, the team with



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the lowest total score is declared the winner. Only one player needs to compete in each individual hole. Partners can share their clubs, but only if the combined number of clubs isn't more than 14.

SKINS

With Skins, players compete

for a special prize through each hole. This prize, called a "skin," is usually money. The golfer with the lowest score on a hole wins the "skin." If there is a tie, the "skin" carries over to the next hole. Variations can include creating negative values or increasing the value after each hole. Traditionally,

anyone can compete for a carried-over "skin," no matter what their score was on the previous hole.

BETTER BALL

Better (or Best) Ball otherwise resembles a scramble, but in this case, each team member plays their own ball

throughout the match instead of selecting a single shot to play. The lowest score from each player on a hole is then recorded as the team's score for that hole. This format is particularly suited for skilled players who wish to compete individually against a team of less experienced golfers.

Finding that Lost Ball

You're losing time, money, points and your patience. Now what?

Nothing can disrupt a good round like the inability to locate a lost ball. You're wasting valuable time searching, while suffering a series of small financial losses since high-quality golf balls can be quite costly. There may also be a stroke penalty. Here's how to prevent this frustrating situation from ruining your day.

KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE BALL

After making a swing, you'll have to do more than look in the general direction where your ball is traveling. If you hope to locate it quickly before your next shot, stay focused.

Even when the lawn is in perfect condition, your ball may end up in challenging bunkers, thick rough or underbrush and fallen leaves. Carefully track its trajectory and landing spot from the moment of club impact, taking note of every bounce and roll. If you don't, you'll already be at a disadvantage for the next swing. Time is of the essence, and you might end up rushing things. If possible, note natural landmarks such as distinctive course slopes, trees, water features or bushes to help with remembering the ball's location.



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IDENTIFY YOUR BALL

If you typically play alone or with just one ball per round, you might not see the need for unique identifiers. But most golfers pair up with others, and that everyday practice can increase the likelihood of confusion over a

ball.

Consider adding distinctive patterns on the dimples or inscribing your initials on the ball's surface. Both are excellent ways to quickly recognize whose is whose.

You can then quickly resume play without needing to take a drop.

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

If you cannot locate your ball after a tee shot, take advantage of at least knowing the general area where it landed. Move around the zone where it should be, either by walking or driving your cart, and view the space from a

series of unique vantage points. In tall grass, for instance, only a small portion of the ball is often visible — and sometimes from very specific angles. Remain vigilant as you search, but always set a time limit. You don't want to hinder the pace of play for fellow golfers.

Avoiding Golf Injuries

Don't let the serenity of a game of golf fool you: It's easy to get hurt on the course.

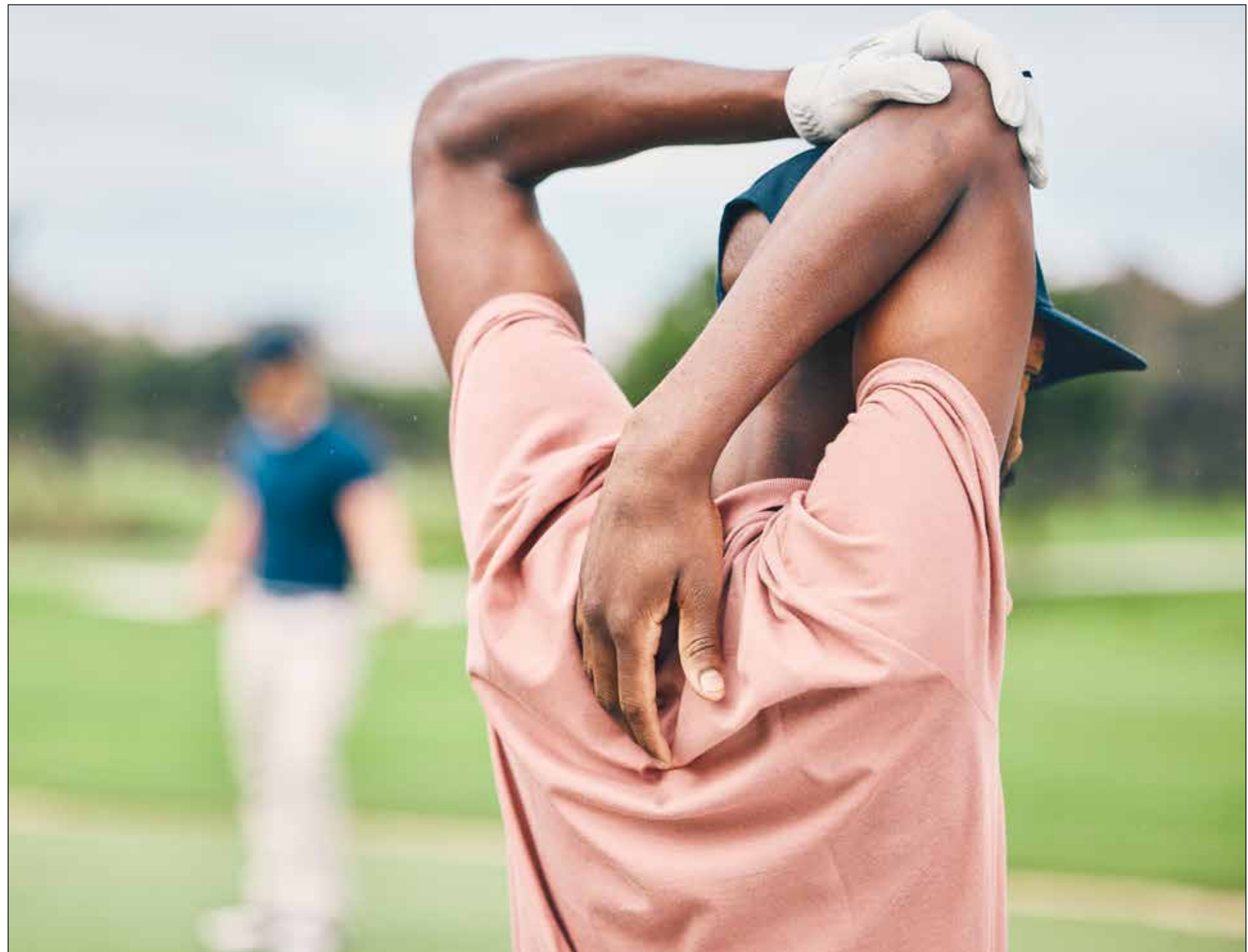
The sloping fairways, gorgeous water features and glistening greens shouldn't distract you from the potential hazards surrounding you. Injuries can and do occur when we don't focus on safety.

WARMING UP

Conditions such as golfer's elbow and wrist tendinitis can develop gradually and, of course, every golfer is at risk for muscle strains. Address both by establishing a proper warm-up routine. You'll significantly reduce your chances of dealing with these common issues. Take a few slow-motion swings and a brief walk. Consider performing some lunges or squats to make sure you have the full range of motion. While you're on the course, stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water.

YOUR SURROUNDINGS

Golf involves the use of metal clubs and a hard ball, which can pose a risk of injury. Always make sure that your playing partners are at a safe distance before you take a shot. They may be at risk from your swing or a fast-moving ball. Be aware of other groups on the course. Wait until those in front of you are well out of range before proceeding. If your swing goes awry and your ball appears to be



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heading towards someone, shout "Fore!" loudly to alert them to seek cover.

CHECK THE FORECAST

The National Weather Service reports that about five percent of all annual lightning-related fatalities happen on golf courses. Those overall

numbers may be low, but the individual risk remains. So, check the weather forecast before you head out for the next round. If an unexpected storm approaches, put away your clubs and steer clear of trees. Return to a permanent structure or a fully enclosed vehicle as quickly as possible.

AVOID WILDLIFE

One of the most beautiful parts of the game is also its most dangerous: Golf is played in and around the natural habitats of wildlife.

The types of animals you may encounter will vary based on the location of your course, so it's wise to familiarize

yourself with native animals before you play. Always be aware of your surroundings, especially when your ball lands in tall grass or near water. Golfers should be particularly cautious of potential encounters with snakes, ants, bees and alligators on the course.