

balance

/ by Trisha Haws, Licensed Massage Therapist

Trisha Haws, co-owner of Movement Restoration in Scottsdale, Ariz., and licensed massage therapist, has 14+ years of experience working with Olympic and professional athletes of the PGA, NFL, NBA, MLB, NHL as well as business professionals throughout the Valley. For more information, visit www.movementrestoration.com.

Moving FORE-ward Without Pain

Why it's important for golfers to take care of their bodies before they get injured

The game of golf. Some believe it's more of a mental pursuit than a physical one, but golfers have come to appreciate the increasing importance of the body's role in mastering the game. What's more, golfers are now embracing the tremendous benefits that massage therapy can have on improving their game and moving them forward.

Healthy movement is essential for a golfer at any skill level. Whether you're a novice swinger or a touring professional, including massage therapy as a regular part of your training program can help you improve mobility, flexibility, circulation, balance, avoid injury and maximize performance – all of which will enhance your overall golf game.

A golfer's swing, for example, requires great rotation and compression and asks for the entire body's cooperation. Because of this, a golfer must rely on balanced movement throughout the thoracic spine (mid to upper back) as well the lower body (pelvis, hips, legs, etc). If movement, or mobility, is lacking in either of these areas, then other parts of the body will have to compensate.

At Movement Restoration, we live by the mantra that massage therapy is the foundation to restoring natural movement back to the body. Specifically, massage therapy helps rebalance

the entire musculoskeletal system – the combination of bones, muscles, tendons and ligaments of the body working together. When a muscle experiences fatigue from overuse, another muscle will kick in to try and restore balance to the body. Because this secondary muscle is not meant to sustain that kind of responsibility and stress, it creates a domino effect of muscles becoming strained and affected.

Some of the most susceptible areas of the golfer's upper body include the pectorals, arms and hand muscles, which can get tense from gripping the club and rotating during the swing, as well as the latissimus dorsi near the shoulder and upper back region which is activated during the rotation on the downswing and follow-through. The lower back, including the quadratus lumborum muscles and sacroiliac joint, are particularly vulnerable to spinal misalignment during the swing. Other areas include the gluteals and piriformis around the hips from the twisting motion of the swing, tight hamstrings and calves and sore feet from simply walking a golf course. Knees, too, can be frequently injured areas when pressure is applied as a golfer leans his or her weight on the front leg during pivoting.

Working these muscles and connective tissues through massage provides the following benefits: increased circulation that

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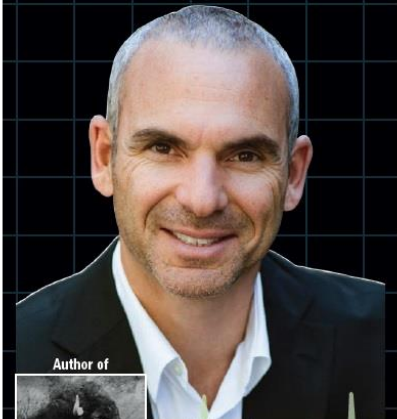
assists in removing muscle wastes that can accumulate due to overuse and the repetitive motion of the golf swing; helps reduce muscle spasms, trigger points and adhesions that need to be addressed to help prevent injury and improve quality of movement; improves range of motion and muscle flexibility resulting in increased power and performance; decreases anxiety and stress levels and improves mental focus.

Regular, routine maintenance provides greater efficiency of movement when you're not able to be treated by a professional. If regular massage therapy isn't an option, self-treatment is also effective. A good massage therapist will make recommendations for golfers based on his or her lifestyle including exercises that can be done at home using products like foam rollers, massage balls - even golf balls can be used to release tight shoulders, pecs, deltoids, and rhomboids. Stretching and movement together is key as this combination stimulates the production of synovial fluid, which nourishes and protects joints and increases your range of motion.

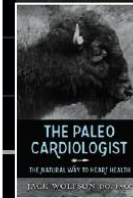
As a massage therapist, I've found the key is to treat golfers before an injury occurs – to prepare them for play, put tired muscles into rest and recovery after a day on the course and prepare their bodies for their next round.

The Natural Cardiologist

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