

Got Pain? Try A Golf Specific Massage

By: Lisa Ferfusion, CMT

As an avid golfer, I well understand the emotional pain of a bad golfing day, 17 points over par, losing 6 balls to the water, hitting trees instead of the fairway, or playing in the sand traps! Oh, those growling days, when nothing seems to go right, but the ball!

As a Massage Therapist, I am acutely aware of the physical tolls of the game. In order to play a good game of golf, you must be fit to play well. What does “being fit” really mean? Being Healthy! Being fit means that your muscle tissues need to be healthy, flexible and mobile! Healthy muscle tissues have the ability to create efficient spontaneous movements and prevent injuries. That’s why spas offering golf specific massages are on the rise...it is important to knead out those aches and pains that are so specific to golfers.

How does soreness affect a golfer’s swing?

Think about having a sore back. It is not comfortable to walk, stand, sit or sometimes even touch. When muscle tissues are sore, they’re under stress, are weak and need specific massage related therapies. A golfer’s swing is unnatural to the body because of the fact that you must be in a slightly bending position while trying to hit this tiny ball! The swing involves a stance that has to switch weight from left to right to left again (flexibility in the hips), meanwhile winding your upper back to make a coiling movement while your hips stay balanced underneath you. If your back is sore, muscles will not perform efficiently and you risk further injury of a lower back lumbar sprain or strain.



Jim Furyk getting a massage during a round of golf

How many golfers are suffering?

Statistically more than 50% of golfers suffer from neck weakness, lower back problems, shoulder or rotator cuff stiffness, soreness or pain, elbow dysfunction, lower leg imbalances and / or wrist injuries. As a therapist, 90 % of my clientele are golfers. If a golfer continues playing with stiffness and soreness in their back, they risk further injuries to surrounding muscle groups. This can result in chronic pain cycles, which will interfere with their enjoyment of the game. That is where specific golf massage comes into play.

How does massage specifically help the golfer?

Massage helps everyone from all walks of life but for the athlete or weekend golfer, it relaxes tension, and relieves painful, sore, or stiff muscles. A golfer can enhance their game and swing by relieving soreness or

stiffness or pain through regular therapeutic massage. Massage allows the reprogramming of the nervous system and opens channels for new habits to form. If you're receiving training lessons, the muscles are less stressed and can adopt new strategies to help better your swing.

Massage also promotes health, vitality and well-being. It provides the release of muscular tension, stress, and eliminates metabolic waste products as well as restoring the muscle elasticity, length and range of motion. Massage has positive physiological affects on the nervous system and organs as well. It releases endorphins that give you a great feeling afterwards. Massage is no longer a luxury, especially for golfers---golf-specific massage can reduce the risk of injuries.

How does Golf Specific Massage reduce the risk of injury?

1) Golfers are less likely to incur injuries if their muscles are flexible and mobile. Especially when returning to golf after a long period away from the game. Also, golf massage is specifically designed to work all the groups of muscles involved in a swing.

2) Healthy muscles keep a clear communication channel to and from the nervous system. This enables efficient movement of your extremity controlling muscles from your center of gravity (or core) and is the key to dynamic balance in the body movement required by a proper golf swing. Health muscles also help keep strong bone structure to ensure good posture.

What are the different types of massage? There are relaxation messages and several types of therapeutic messages.

A relaxation massage involves touch with light to moderate pressure. These are classic continuous strokes and have a rhythmic gliding touch that creates a full body experience. Examples would be Swedish and Esalen massages that use effleurage, petrissage and kneading.

Therapeutic massages are actually best for golfers because they address specific muscles that tend to be tight from play or overuse. Following are 4 different therapeutic messages and what they accomplish to help relieve and restore your aching muscles.

1. Deep-Tissue message combines deep pressure with kneading strokes to help releave tight muscles and connective tissues. This massage focuses on problem areas of tension, helping to release toxins that make muscles stiff.
2. Myofascial Trigger Point Therapy releases the triggers that limit the range of motion of the muscle causing referred pain, myofascial dysfunction, soreness and stiffness.
3. Sports Massage is one that includes rigorous massaging strokes and passive assisted stretching to relax tightened muscles.
4. Neuromuscular Therapy restores the elasticity in the muscle fibers by stripping and breaking up adhesions due to injuries or muscle strains.



I highly recommend these types of massage because the results are enormously effective for the golfer. Regaining flexibility, mobility, and stability in the hips, shoulders, legs and arms are all beneficial to your bodies' ability to perform a great golf swing. As a Therapist I use a combination of therapies, including all that are listed above or individually depending upon the client's issues and goals. My Treatment Goals must be in line with what the client wants from their sessions, decreased pain, more range of motion, or stability and balance. My success partially depends upon the client too, and whether they are consistent with their treatments and stretching/ strengthening programs. Overall, most of my clients become pain free and after the first few sessions, golfers report benefits like their drive was much better, their back didn't hurt to swing the club, or they noticed improvements in their ball striking ability. Receiving specific attention to the muscle groups used in a swing is important because a golfer can gain more power, more distance, and better endurance. Being "golf fit" will minimize your risk of injury. But should you find yourself in need, regularly scheduled golf massages can keep your muscles firing properly, with less pain, so you can play at your optimal best and most importantly, enjoy the game more!

Lisa Ferguson, is a licensed massage therapist that currently owns and operates Massage Fitness Co. in San Francisco, CA.. lisa@massagefitnessco.com.