

GOOD SPORT SCIENCE AND MEDICINE TIPS FOR THE YOUNG GOLFER

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INJURY TREATMENT

The mnemonic PRICED is useful word to remember in the management of soft tissue injury.

P = Prevention. The best management of all injuries is to prevent them! Strategies for prevention involve good warm-up, effective stretching, correct injury treatment and maintenance of good symmetrical strength and range of motion. All young golfers should undergo a preventative screening to establish their specific areas of inflexibility and decreased control of movement. Problems in these areas will lead to decreased consistency in the golf swing.

R = Rest. Activity will promote bleeding by increasing blood flow, making the resultant clot larger and slower to heal. Place the athlete in a comfortable position, preferably lying down. The injured part should be immobilised and supported.

I = Ice. Application of ice aims to reduce local circulation by decreasing the diameter of the blood vessels entering the area. Ice also reduces pain, swelling, and muscle spasm. The conventional methods of applying ice are crushed ice in a wet towel/plastic bag, immersion in icy water, or commercial cold packs wrapped in a towel. Apply for approximately twenty minutes every two hours for the first forty-eight hours. Caution: do not apply ice directly to skin as ice burns may occur, do not apply ice to people who are sensitive to cold or have circulatory problems, also note, children have a lower tolerance to ice.

C = Compression. Compression reduces bleeding and swelling by increasing pressure in the area and making it more difficult for local blood flow. Compression also provides support for the injured part. Apply a firm wide compression bandage over a large area covering the part, as well as, above and below the injured part. Always check the circulation below the bandaged area.

E = Elevation. Elevation reduces bleeding and swelling by applying the simple gravity principle. Fluid generally runs down-hill so if the part is elevated above the heart, not as much blood will be pumped up, also, swelling will be drained away. Elevation also reduces pain by decreasing pressure in the area. Raise the area above the level of the heart at all possible times.

D = Diagnosis. If you are concerned about the severity of the injury or the athlete is still unable to train or play after the acute inflammation phase then it is desirable to consult a sports medicine specialist.

GOLF SPECIFIC WARM-UP

GOOD FLEXIBILITY.....it is important to gain and maintain good flexibility. A regular programme of stretching will ensure that you maintain an optimal range of motion. Good range of motion will ensure the most consistent swing and should lessen your chance of injury. In your growing years, the bones rapidly grow and the muscles are stretched. Therefore strong muscles will resist growth and tighten more than weaker ones. Muscles like, the quadriceps, hip flexors and calf muscles all tend to get tight.

WHEN TO STRETCH.....you should always stretch after some form of warm-up, especially for more aerobic sports. For golf, this may in fact be as simple as a warm shower or brisk walk combined with hitting a few short irons. Remember that increasing the blood flow to the muscles required for the activity is the basic goal of warm-up. If the conditions are cold, then ensure that the effects of the warm-up are not lost by wearing warm clothing and completing your warm-up as close to the actual stretching and game preparation as possible.

SEQUENCING YOUR WARM-UP.....always move progressively through your bag, that is, start with pitching/chipping and then hit a few balls with each club from pitching wedge through to driver. **DON'T** just walk on to the first tee and swing away. We all pay later for the silly things we do in our youth. Knowledge is powerful and prevention is better than cure.

SPECIFIC AREAS OF CONCERN.....the most “at risk” area for the golfer is the low back. If you have a family history of back pain or you know that you are stiff then extra care should be taken with stretching and warming up for your back. If you don't know whether you are likely to have problem then a preventative screening with a golf trained physiotherapist will isolate your areas of likely problem.

COMMON SENSE ON THE GOLF

COURSE

HYDRATION.....always ensure you have plenty to drink both prior to and during games of golf. This especially important on days where the temperature is above 22 degrees or if the competition involves greater than 18 holes in a day or multiple days of competition. Remember that clear urine is the best indicator of adequate hydration. By the time you feel thirsty you are already dehydrated. Decrease in performance soon follows.

GOOD EATING.....It makes good sense to load the body with the correct fuel to ensure that it is able to perform with quality for a number of hours. Ensuring that you eat well prior to teeing off makes good sense. The following foods which provide rapid uptake of the fuel required to provide energy quickly for both before and during a round include potatoes, honey, bread, bagels, sultanas, raisins, watermelon and glucose (jelly babies etc.)

SUN PROTECTION.....always wear sunscreen and a hat especially in the above competition environments. The effects of heat stress are gradual but significant even on the repeated swinging of the golf club. More importantly it will effect concentration and therefore your competitiveness.

GOOD FOOTWEAR.....tightness in calves or shins and abnormal shoe wearing are indicative of problems in the functioning of the foot as it adapts the ground. Quality footwear should be a priority and the possibility of a podiatry consult and orthotic prescription should not be dismissed.