



Golf Injury Cheat Sheet

62% of amateurs will sustain a significant golf injury, typically because they are out of shape, have poor swing mechanics, or don't adequately warm-up. For the professionals that number is even higher at 85%, but their injuries tend to come from overuse ie. hitting 200 to 500 balls a day.

Here are some tips and changes you can address in your technique to reduce your injury risk.

Having a friend video your golf swing may be helpful, or a few lessons with a coach could keep you out of the injury bunker. The following cheat sheet assumes you are a right-handed golfer and therefore your lead arm/side is the left (the same principles would apply vice versa for left-handed golfers).

The Injury

Lead Wrist

Hold your lead hand (left for right handed players) in front of you, thumb up, make a fist. There is a natural cup or angle at the back of the wrist – this is the power position for the joint.

- If left hand in a 'weak position' – thumb down the top of the handle - you risk a flat or bowed wrist on impact and possible injury
- Inadequate arm and wrist strength to lead the club through impact in this position
- Tend to over-extend and cock wrist for power, stressing the extensor tendons and overloading ligaments, especially if hitting the ground frequently

The Solution

- Rotate left hand away from the target about 30° from the weak position. So your thumb is at about 1 on an imaginary clock.
- This creates a slight cup in the wrist and a better power position

Lead Elbow

- Extensor tendons on outside of forearm are overloaded by jarring impact of poor stroke, mishitting ball and ground
- Results in muscle strain and tendonitis on the outside of the elbow called 'tennis elbow'
- Exacerbated by excessive tight gripping of the club

- Avoid locking arm and elbow for more power. Keep it straight but relaxed, arms 'soft' from start to finish
- Momentum of downswing will pull the left arm straight
- This allows better absorption of impact forces and decreases load through tendons and ligaments

Trail Elbow

- Flexor tendons on the inside of the forearm are strained and overloaded by flexing and rotating the wrist during the impact and follow-through phase
- Strain results in tendonitis on the inside of elbow called 'golfer's elbow'

- Power from the body not the wrists
- Avoid flicking (flexing) and cocking your wrist on and after impact.

The Injury

The Problem

The Solution

Lead Shoulder

- Keeping left arm too tight to the chest and straight during backswing and impact – overloads the joint with impact forces causing labral (cartilage) tears
- In backswing and follow through rotation from shoulders causes impingement and damage to AC (acromioclavicular) joint
- Rotator cuff muscle strain or tear when overloading them to power the swing
- Keep arms loose and relaxed slightly forward/away from body
- Rotation comes from thoracic spine (upper body) NOT from shoulders
- Turn more with upper body, swing less with arms. Arms should 'follow' upper body rotation, not lead the rotation
- Improve upper spine (thoracic) mobility and shoulder joint flexibility through exercise
- Power from the body, not the shoulder or arm muscles

Lead Knee

- As you shift weight forward onto your left knee for swing through, all torque (rotational forces) and compression forces focused on inside of left knee
- Golfers often square the foot and lock knees – this increases shear forces on the knee, causing ligament strain and meniscus (cartilage) damage
- The knee should shift in front of the hip very early on in the downswing
- Avoid having hips slide past the knee towards the target as this increases knee stress
- Focus on hips and pelvis rotating rather than sliding
- Line of left thigh should be vertical or leaning away from target on downswing
- Maintain a soft squat at the knees approximately 25° flexed
- Angle the left foot 20 or 30° outwards towards the target at address to promote hip rotation rather than sliding off loading the knee

Lower Back

- Power swing focuses on rotation of pelvis through swing
- Torque (rotational force) created through the pelvis and lumbar spine can overload and strain muscles, ligaments and tendons of lower back
- Control and conditioning of lower back critical for injury prevention
- Shearing effect can damage vertebral discs
- Avoid 'popping' after impact, arching your back overloads your spine
- Power swing requires separation between rotation of the pelvis and trunk – greater separation means greater speed - this requires immense core strength and control to avoid injury
- Back strengthening exercises for core, pelvis, hamstring and glute muscles are crucial, as well as hip mobility exercises
- At address, hinge at the pelvis DON'T flex (slump) the lower back, this will increase load on your back
- Hips and spine must extend (straighten) together during the follow through
- Reduce injury risk by turning in unison – the hips and shoulders turn together on backswing and follow through – you sacrifice power but may save your back!