

Script – Print – Ease into the golf season

Spring has arrived which means another golf season is upon us. And that has many golf enthusiasts racing off to area courses.

Before tossing the clubs in the trunk, however, the priority is getting your body ready for the long season. Hopefully, you've maintained some level of fitness during the winter. But if you spent the past few months watching Netflix from the couch, experts have some important advice in order to keep your body injury free, especially to start the season.

"I would just start a stretching routine," says Matthew Davidson, a physical therapist with OSF HealthCare. "Start there, work on flexibility a little bit, range of motion, try and do what you can to counteract that stiffness that you seem to get over the winter months. Cardiovascular exercises are really good because they can't only build up that system but improve blood flow and help with weight loss for those who might have gained a few pounds over the winter."

For the most part, golf is a relatively safe sport, but injuries can happen, especially because of not using proper form or technique. Most golf-related injuries involve the lower back, shoulders, wrists, and elbows. Walking nine or 18 holes can be challenging, especially if you've been mostly sedentary for the past several months. Even carrying a golf bag can cause back and shoulder pain. That's why it's important to start making changes immediately. Flexibility is the key. It will promote mobility, which helps joints throughout the entire body.

"First of all, depending on your fitness level you might want to start with nine holes before 18," says Davidson. "You might want to go to the range and walk between the range and the putting green. As far as a walking routine, start with five or 10 minutes. Walk your dog around the block and increase the distance and ramp it up from there."

Before starting any round, give yourself at least 10-15 minutes to properly stretch your back, hamstrings, abdominals, arms and shoulders to stay flexible. And make sure to get plenty of practice swings in before you head over to the first tee.

"One of the main things we do is sit," says Davidson. "We sit at our desk, we sit and watch TV, and we sit to relax. Golf is all about maintaining good posture. Get to the golf course early, try a few swings, and go to the putting green. If you have time, go to the driving range, and start with the smaller irons and work your way up to the driver and not just on the first hole with the first swing."

And remember to swing properly. The keys of a good swing include good posture, a stable lower back, and a slow relaxed swing. Most injuries that happen on the course are a result of poor form and an incorrect swing. An early-season injury, especially during cooler temperatures, can really set back a golfer for a period of time.

"Muscle strains, if they're simple, can take anywhere from a few days or if they're severe a month or longer, it just depends on the person," says Davidson. "My advice is to use pain as your guide. If you're feeling something isn't right don't try and go out there and be a hero. Rest up, ice, use heat, whatever you need to do to manage it. And if it doesn't improve, certainly go see your physician."

For more information on preparing for the golf season, click [here](#).