



Acupuncture for the Golfer: Common Golf Injuries

A Harvard Medical School study conducted in 2004 discovered that 36 percent of golf injuries occurred to the lower back, 32 percent of injuries affected the elbows, 21 percent affected the hands and wrists, while another 11 percent of injuries occurred to the shoulders and knees. While golf is not considered a contact sport, many of the mechanics and repetitive motions used can lead to injury and pain. These common golf injuries can hamper a player's performance or even keep the player off the course for months at a time. Acupuncture can not only help heal these common injuries but also keep the golfer's body maintained, balanced and in top form so that injuries do not occur. Let Acupuncture improve your game!

Back Injuries

The motion of the golf swing is the main factor contributing to back pain. A golfer twists the spine to one side an average of 40-60 times during a round of golf, while a beginner or average golfer may take many more swings. This one sided-twisting motion puts a lot of stress on the lower back. The hunched over position used while putting, along with frequent bending to pick up balls, clubs or replace divots as well as carrying the golf bag are all factors that may lead to upper and lower back strain and pain. Common back injuries include: muscle sprain/strain or spasm, ligament sprain, sciatica, osteoarthritis, facet joint irritation, sacroiliac joint pain, lumbar or thoracic disc degeneration (DJD) and disc bulge or herniation.

Elbow Injuries

The two most common elbow injuries include golfer's elbow (medial epicondylitis) and tennis elbow (lateral epicondylitis). These two conditions are caused by overuse and are both tendonitis injuries. Tendonitis is irritation and inflammation of the tendons in the forearm that attach to the elbow bones or epicondyles. Tennis elbow is actually more common among golfers than golfer's elbow! Tennis elbow consists of inflammation and pain located at the outside part of the elbow and upper forearm, while golfer's elbow consists of pain and inflammation at the inner elbow and inside aspect of the upper forearm.

Wrist and Hand Injuries

The repetitive motion used while playing golf, along with the high speeds needed for many golf swings place the hands and wrists at high risk for injury. The impact of the club hitting the ball travels through the club and is absorbed by the hands and wrists. This "impact reverberation" adds up with the many strokes used during a game and places the hands, wrists and forearms under much stress and strain. Pain and tenderness on the top of the wrist is a common site for tendonitis. In fact, all of the common golf-related wrist injuries are tendonitis based and include irritation, swelling and inflammation of the tendons responsible for wrist movement. Carpal tunnel syndrome (numbness and tingling radiating from the wrists into the palms and fingers), along with DeQuervain's tendonitis is frequently seen in golfers. DeQuervain's tendonitis is a condition where the wrist is painful near the base of the player's thumb. Trigger Finger, wrist impaction syndrome and fracture of the Hamate bone are also commonly seen hand injuries.

Shoulder Injuries

Injury to the rotator cuff is by far the most common shoulder injury. The shoulder joint is a “ball and socket” joint much like the hip joint, but very shallow when compared to the depth of the hip joint. The shoulder therefore relies heavily on the four rotator cuff muscles to retain the integrity of the shoulder and keep it in the joint. The repetitive strain and impact the golf swing puts on the muscles surrounding the shoulder and joint socket can lead to muscle strain/sprain, muscle tears, tendonitis, arthritis, bursitis, upper arm strain, torn labrum, and adhesions (scar tissue) that accumulate and impair shoulder movement.

Knee, Foot and Hip Injuries

Generation of swing power begins with the feet being firmly planted on the ground. The feet and knees thus play an important role in stabilizing the body throughout the “whip-like” motion of the golf swing. The feet also move in different directions during the swing with the back foot allowing for more pronation during the follow-through than the front foot. Injuries can occur when the golfer adopts improper swing mechanics or loses balance and footing while hitting a ball off uneven surfaces. During the golf swing the body also undergoes tremendous amounts of pivoting and twisting motions that can aggravate not only the knees, but also the hips and groin that are subjected to repeated adduction, flexion and extension movements. These repetitive motions require a great deal of control and recruitment of the gluteal (buttock) and adductor (inner thigh) muscle groups further contributing to muscle strain.