

Warming up – (Pre-Game and Practice drills)

Most of us acknowledge that it's important to warm-up before teeing off, but few of us do it particularly well. It should be remembered that many of the movements required to swing a golf club require maximum ranges of motion and velocities. An appropriate warm-up not only helps us to achieve peak performance from the first tee, but also helps to protect our body from injury.

Why Warm-up?

Proper warm-up activities prepare the muscles and joints for the golf swing. Without a proper warm-up, muscles are cold, inflexible, and unforgiving. On the other hand, muscles and joints that have been warmed up are more elastic and pliable. They will have a better chance of withstanding the tensile forces produced in the swing, and contract smoothly through a full range of motion.

What's Actually Happening?

Warm-up activities produce an increase in blood flow to the muscles being used in the swing. Because blood itself is quite warm, it helps to warm the muscles and surrounding connective tissue (which includes: joints, ligaments, and tendons). Also, when muscles contract, a chemical reaction is needed to power the contraction. These chemical reactions produce heat as a by-product within the muscle cell. The heat produced during a muscle contraction is the primary contributor to the "warming-up" of the muscles and joints.

The Best Warm-up

The best type of warm-up uses actions that mimic the golf swing. This activates the correct neuromuscular pathways (the electrical system of your muscles) and provides a rehearsal of the swing. It increases range of motion (ROM) in the joints and muscles used in the swing and improves the amount of force that these muscles can contract with. Research has shown that static stretching can produce a 5-30% reduction in our strength and power that could acutely affect our performance on the day. Remember, static stretches or golf-specific flexibility programs should be done at least 24-36 hours prior to game day.



So, why don't most golfers warm-up?

- Most golfers don't know exactly what to do – therefore they have no set routine
- There is a perception that it will take too long – i.e. not enough time before tee off
- Inconvenience - it all seems too hard

Incorrect warm-up activities include:

- Rapid and jerky twisting of the spine
- Swinging more than 2 clubs - especially at high speeds
- Bouncing in a stretch (e.g. trunk twists)

A proper warm-up should take about 15-30 minutes to complete so don't arrive at the course 5 minutes prior to your tee-off time and expect your body to be able to hit a consistent drive off the first tee. Allow time to go for a 3-5 minute walk and then warm-up your golfing muscles with the round the clock drill, below. Have a Putt, relax, and don't forget to drink plenty of fluids both before and during your round. (100-150mls every 15-20mins is a good guide), as thirst is not a good indicator of the body's hydration needs.

The following drill can be practiced at home or at the course as a warm up drill. You should start by assuming the address position and lightly grip the club. Concentrate on staying relaxed and feeling the weight of the club throughout the drill. The rhythmical back and forth transition motions should feel smooth. Jerky motions usually mean you are trying too hard and have too much muscle tension. Try the following drill sequence:



1 Swing the club forwards towards the target, but stop with the arms pointing at the 4 o'clock position.



2 You then need to let the club swing back and slow at the 8 o'clock position.



3 Without stopping, then let the club swing forward once again and stop with the arms pointing at the 3 o'clock position.



4 You then need to let the club swing back again and slow at the 9 o'clock position.



5 Continue again, maintaining your rhythm and let the club stop with the arms pointing at the 2 o'clock position



6 ...and the 10 o'clock position



“Fitness is an essential part of my life and golf game. Plus we all have to do something to keep up with Tiger!”
– Greg Norman



7 ...before finally swinging through to the balanced finish position.