

Golf Fitness Tip

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FIT-TO-PERFORM, LLC
Mark Tolle, MS, ATC, CSCS, PAS

Posture:

What does it mean for your golf game?

Often times you will here someone say to you, straighten up, don't slump over (your mother), and when referring to your golf posture you hear, bend from your hips. More times than not it is your teaching professional that is helping you develop a good postural set up when addressing the ball. As you probably have been told, your set up position, that is, your alignment and posture are key components in developing a good sound golf swing. Teaching Professionals explain that a good spine angle, soft knees, and proper hip position allow your body to rotate much easier during your golf swing.

You may or may not have good golf posture but what you need to know is what happens to your posture when you walk away from the golf swing. What happens when you sit in your car or sit at work? My mission here is to help you understand the importance of good posture in everyday life and how that applies to functional activities such as golf. The influence of our daily lives establishes a He long term effect on our body. You could say that our environment shapes our bodies. If you sit in a car commuting to work, and then sit in a chair for several hours a day, the body reacts and adapts to that stimulus. The result may be that some muscles become short and strong while others become long and weak. Additionally muscle compensations develop whereby one muscle takes over the job of another. This results in a number of dysfunctional positions such as a slumped back, forward shoulders, forward head and tight hips. With this continued positioning over a period of time, you may start to notice back or neck soreness and/or develop chronic pain. This will also result in significant problems for your golf swing.

This is one example of the many ways in which the body adapts and changes to the environment. You may wonder how your own body

has adapted and compensated over the years. You can find out simply by standing in front of a long mirror, preferably with few clothes on. As you stand there, look down at your feet. Do they point straight or outward at an angle? Are they directly under your hips or out wide and outside your hips? Look at your knee caps, do they point straight away or off at an angle? Now how about your hips, is one higher than the other or do they seem forward to your shoulders? Are your shoulders level? Or is one of them higher or lower than the other? Again look at your shoulders and arms; do they appear rounded forward and rotated inward? Now stand sideways to the mirror and look at how your upper back is curved. Do you look slouched and curved forward? An excessive curve or slouched upper back is a very common problem that is restrictive to the golf swing.

Hopefully with this little test you are beginning to recognize how your current posture will influence your daily function. If your muscles are not functioning correctly they will pull a hip or shoulder out of position. Not only causing unusual wear in that joint, but also resulting in restrictions to the normal movement patterns of that joint. Then when your teaching professional wants you to move a certain way in your golf swing, your body and brain are saying no, because it does not recognize that movement. When discussing postural correction our goal is to move the body back toward its original design or blueprint of perfect posture. It is quite evident that when our muscles are functioning properly, they keep our bones in correct alignment. It is then not only much easier to move, but we are more coordinated, flexible, stronger and powerful. One of the first steps in developing any exercise program or sport specific training is to begin with posture correction. You must straighten first then strengthen; otherwise you strengthen dysfunctional movement patterns. Jack Nicklaus, one of the greatest golfers of all time was know to take this approach to exercise

in the 1980's, and he credits exercises designed to change his posture as a way to keep him playing and delaying his eventual hip surgery.

So if you are serious about improving your golf game this winter, you need to work with a PGA Teaching Professional and look for ways to improve your posture.

Mark Tolle is a Golf Fitness Specialist at the Buffalo Grove Golf and Sports Center. He specializes in functional fitness and is trained in the Egoscue Method of posture correction. He can be contacted at 773-965-4959 or www.golffitnesschicago.com