

Golf - health benefits

Golf is a very popular sport worldwide. It is a game played on a large outdoor course, the object being to propel a small hard ball into a series of 'holes' with as few strokes as possible, using a variety of wood or iron-tipped sticks or 'golf clubs'. In 2005, it was calculated that there were nearly 32,000 golf courses in the world.

Golf provides 'a stimulating challenge combined with a healthy walk in pleasant surroundings' and can be played by people of all abilities and ages. Golf can be played on your own or in a team. It may be a casual pastime or a competitive activity. Golf is the third most popular leisure activity in Victoria.

Health benefits

Golf can be good for your health and your heart. Walking an average course for a round of golf can be as much as four kilometres. If you walk 18 holes three to five times a week, you'll get an optimal amount of endurance exercise for your heart. If you pull your clubs or carry them, you'll burn even more calories each round and benefit even more.

Playing golf regularly can help you:

- Stay fit
- Improve muscle tone and endurance
- Lose weight and body fat.

Other benefits

Golf can also:

- Be a great way to keep in touch with friends
- Assist in reducing stress (as a result of the physical activity and also due to the pleasure of walking in an open and pleasant environment)
- Provide opportunities to meet new people
- Help develop a sense of community connectedness.

Getting started

Golf can be a very social and enjoyable sport. While you compete against others, you can also compete with yourself to better your previous best score.

A good way to get started is to take lessons to acquire the fundamental skills before hitting the course. Alternatively, you could gather a group of friends, hire some clubs and make your way around your local public course, which can be equally as enjoyable. As you improve, you may consider purchasing a set of clubs and, if you are really keen, you may have the clubs custom-made to suit you.

Preventing injury

Golf is a leisurely sport and, compared to other sports, the overall risk of injury is low. However, injuries still can and do occur. Common injuries are to the lower back, wrist and elbow, head and eye. Causes of injury include overuse, incorrect technique, hitting the ground instead of the ball, aggravation of a previous injury and falling.

Some tips to avoid injuries include:

- Warm up and stretch before playing, paying particular attention to your back, shoulders and arms. Include gentle movement and mobility exercises followed by gentle air swings or ball hits using short irons (a type of golf club).
- Take lessons. Good technique is your best defence against injuries.
- Stand at least four club lengths away from a swinging club.
- Use good equipment including shoes, socks, gloves and clothing.
- Have golf equipment professionally fitted before purchase.
- Wear sun protection (clothing, hat and 30+ sunscreen) at all times.
- Drink water before, during and after a game.
- Know and practise the basic rules and etiquette of the game. Check that no one else is standing close by before you swing. Don't play until the group in front is out of the way. Shout 'fore' to warn of danger to players and spectators. Give way to ground staff and wait until they call you to play on.
- Lift and carry clubs safely and, when necessary, use a buggy.
- When the temperature exceeds 35° Celsius, you may need to reconsider the playing conditions for further play.
- Stop playing immediately when an injury occurs.
- Seek first aid or prompt medical treatment for any type of injury, irrespective of how severe it is.

Where to get help

- Your local council
- Local golf club
- Smartplay Tel. (03) 9674 8777

Things to remember

- Golf can be good for your health and your heart.
- Consider lessons to acquire the fundamental skills of golf.
- Stretch before playing, paying particular attention to your back, shoulders and arms.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

Smartplay

Content on this website is provided for education and information purposes only. Information about a therapy, service, product or treatment does not imply endorsement and is not intended to replace advice from your doctor or other registered health professional. Content has been prepared for Victorian residents and wider Australian audiences, and was accurate at the time of publication. Readers should note that, over time, currency and completeness of the information may change. All users are urged to always seek advice from a registered health care professional for diagnosis and answers to their medical questions.

For the latest updates and more information, visit www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Copyright © 1999/2012 State of Victoria. Reproduced from the Better Health Channel (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au) at no cost with permission of the Victorian Minister for Health. Unauthorised reproduction and other uses comprised in the copyright are prohibited without permission.