

4 Simple Ways to Avoid Golf Injuries – And End Up Better Off Than the Pros

Phil Mickelson breaking his leg skiing in 1994.

Dustin Johnson pulling his back lifting a jet ski in 2012.

Dustin Johnson (again) slipping on the stairs earlier this year.

In the storied tradition of golf, there are plenty of tales of players experiencing unfortunate injuries. Most, like the ones above, make sense – even if they could have been avoided.

Some, however, are just bizarre.

- 2006: Jim Furyk pulled a muscle *brushing his teeth*.
- 2013: Tiger Woods threw out his back *sleeping on a soft mattress*.
- 2006: Brandt Jobe cut a couple of fingertips off *sweeping his garage*.

Golf is not (necessarily) a dangerous sport, but if you play long enough, you'll eventually encounter the opportunity to hurt yourself. The risk is even greater if you are among the nearly 9 million golfers over the age of 50.

Dr. Michael Smith of The Smith Clinic for Physical Therapy in Cordova, TN, points out that "senior golfers are more likely to hurt themselves lifting their bag out of the trunk than they are on the course!" He adds, "People look for a magic pill – 2 or 3 stretches they can do just before they hit the links. But it's really consistency and daily discipline that make a difference. People in overall good health are those who generally avoid hurting themselves."

By maintaining a healthy lifestyle and keeping a few basic tips in the back of your mind when you play, **you can greatly increase your odds of golfing well into your golden years.**

- **Warm-up and stretch.** Even though the game *looks* like a leisurely stroll, you are working several muscle groups that need to be loosened up prior to play as with any sport. Pay special attention to your back, arms, and shoulders. Lift and bend properly to avoid lower back pain.
- **Learn good techniques.** Bad form can lead to injuries. Invest in a good trainer to make sure you're swing is right.
- **Use equipment that fits.** Be sure your clubs are the right length to keep from hunching over too much. Wear proper clothing that allows for full range of motion and shoes that fit well. They may be one of the most important pieces of gear you'll take onto the course!
- **Respect the sun.** Play early in the morning or late in the afternoon to avoid the harshest rays, and wear plenty of UVA/UVB sunscreen with an SPF of 30

or higher. Add sunglasses and a hat with a nice wide brim and you'll be ready to go!

After you play, stretch again for a while. If you feel any discomfort seek out natural pain relief, especially for your back.

And stay away from Dustin Johnson. He sounds like an injury looking for a place to happen.

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