

Fit Facts™

FROM THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EXERCISE®

GEARING UP FOR GOLF

Golf is rapidly becoming the sport of choice for many Americans. While some view the sport as slow-paced, golf actually requires a great deal of strength and stamina, not to mention skill. While you may not have to be in the best cardiovascular shape to play golf, your muscles, particularly those of the legs and upper torso, must be both strong and flexible to keep your handicap below an embarrassing level.

THE KEY COMPONENTS

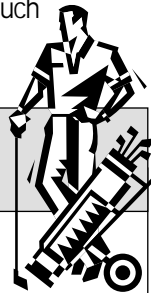
To be successful in golf there are three components of fitness that you should focus on: strength/power, flexibility and cardiovascular endurance. These also are the three most important components of any well-rounded fitness program.

STRENGTH AND POWER

Developing muscular strength and power is essential for generating club head speed, a determining factor in how far you can hit the ball. The box to the right lists specific exercises that will help you generate more power in your upper body as well as stabilizing strength in your lower body. One or more sets of eight to 12 repetitions of each exercise should be performed three days per week.

A recent study found this regimen to be extremely effective. As similar studies have shown, strength training brings about significant improvements in lean body weight, reduced body fat, increased leg strength and joint flexibility and a reduction in systolic blood pressure. But more important, at least to the golfers in this study, was the significant improvement

in club head speed. The 17 exercisers studied increased the speed of their swing by an average of 5 mph. The control group experienced no such improvements.



Exercises To Improve Your Golf Swing

Golfers should perform one set of eight to 12 repetitions of each of the following exercises, three days per week.

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------|
| abdominal curl | low back extension |
| ⦿ biceps curl | ⦿ neck extension |
| ⦿ chest cross | ⦿ neck flexion |
| ⦿ chest press | ⦿ front lat pull |
| ⦿ lateral raise | ⦿ triceps extension |
| ⦿ leg curl | ⦿ weight-assisted chin-up |
| ⦿ leg extension | |
| ⦿ leg press | |
| ⦿ | |

FLEXIBILITY

Flexibility is another important key to developing a full, fluid golf swing. Simply swinging the club is not enough, but you can increase the range of motion in your shoulders, trunk, low back and hamstrings with just a few minutes of daily stretching. But don't save your stretching until five minutes before you tee off. Flexibility exercises must be done every day. And always warm up your muscles before you stretch them to increase your range of motion and prevent injury.

CARDIOVASCULAR CONDITIONING

Finally, cardiovascular conditioning is essential to help you keep your energy up during a long round of golf. That conditioning can help you deal with the stress of making a crucial putt or of getting out of a sand trap. Try to fit in at least 20 minutes of walking, cycling or whatever aerobic activity you prefer, three times per week.

Improving your golf game requires a bit more than simply playing a lot of golf, but it doesn't mean you have to spend hours in the gym. Try the exercises outlined here and you'll not only come closer to par, but you'll also reap numerous health benefits, such as increased lean body weight, reduced body fat, lower blood pressure and increased strength and flexibility.

While it may be difficult to motivate some people to stretch or begin strength training, telling them they might lower their handicap may be just the ticket to get them to head to the gym. Or work out at home. Whichever is most convenient. The point is to do it, regardless of whether it's for health or for a better golf score.

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