

SAFE GOLFING

You are ready. You have been receiving golf lessons all winter, you have a new set of golf clubs and you are dressed from top to bottom like Tiger Woods... But have you thought of your physical condition? You may be thinking that your weekly ski outings have kept you in shape over the winter months. Think again. The start of the golf season often coincides with the official start of the season... for back pain.

Too often, the beginning of nice weather entices us to begin the golf season without being adequately prepared and this may lead to injury and pain. However, with a little patience and by following some advice, you may be able to avoid a golf week-end in your living room...

First of all, it is wise to warm up before beginning golf. Walk a little, do a few stretches for your back, your legs and your forearms and do a few slow practice swings, gradually increasing your speed. Then, if you feel the need, make sure you stretch throughout the game, especially for the back (standing, hands on the buttocks, lean backwards slowly, maintaining the stretch for 5 seconds). Flex your knees and your hips; this helps these joints to absorb more rotation torque and will decrease stress to the back. When flexing the hips and knees, stick your butt out to keep the lower arch in your lower back, this will prevent you from flexing the back. Finally, leave enough time in between games so that your body may recuperate. This lapse of time is individual, and may increase as a function of age, level of general physical activity as well as at the start of the season. An injury can rapidly become a chronic problem if you continue to irritate it.

It is also important to mention that your equipment must be adapted to your body (and not the opposite). Avoid grasping your club too tightly and avoid forcing your swing. This only leads to an increase in muscle tension and can lead to muscle imbalances. If you carry your bag, change sides frequently, or even better, acquire a bag with two straps.