



# FITforeGOLF™

*Better Golf through Better Health*

## Education Series

### WRIST PAIN IN GOLF

#### *Causes and Cures*

Understanding how to manage and prevent golf related injuries to the wrist area.

[www.fitforegolf.com](http://www.fitforegolf.com)

## FITforeGOLF™

### WRIST PAIN IN GOLF

#### **About this Booklet**

The purpose of this booklet is to educate golfers on how to avoid golf-related injuries to the wrist area. The booklet is divided into 2 parts. The first explains the main injuries that can occur to the wrist and how the golf swing creates stress on these structures. This is followed by a special "What can I do?" section that includes technique advice as well as other important exercises for improving the strength and flexibility of the forearm and wrist muscles.

#### **COMMON WRIST INJURIES**

The golf swing involves a high velocity wrist release followed by sudden deceleration just after impact. This places considerable stress on the arms and leaves the wrists susceptible to injury. Certain wrist injuries occur from overuse (e.g. tendonitis, carpal tunnel syndrome) while others occur from one-time traumatic incidents such as taking a deep divot or striking a hidden (i.e. buried) object. Women are generally more susceptible than men to wrist problems which may be related to strength factors.

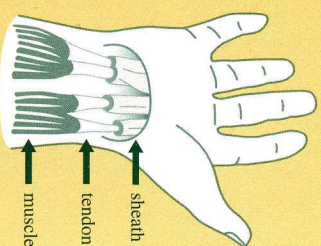
A proper warm-up is very important for preventing wrist injuries.

## WRIST TENDONITIS

Wrist tendons are the long cord-like structures that connect the forearm muscles to the fingers. An outer covering or sheath surrounds each tendon. A small amount of fluid, called *synovial fluid*, is found between the tendon and its sheath. This fluid acts as both a lubricant to reduce friction and provides nutrition to the tendons. Repetitive movements, such as swinging a golf club, can irritate the sheath and tendon -- causing inflammation, thickening and scar tissue. This restricts the tendon's nutrition, creates pain and may even cause "creaking" with movement. Eventually weakening of the tendon occurs resulting in a chronic problem. The tendons on either the back (extensor tendons) or under-surface (flexor tendons) of the wrist are susceptible to tendonitis.

#### **What about my technique?**

One prime cause of wrist tendonitis amongst golfers is increased grip pressure causing unnecessary tension within the finger and wrist tendons. A common technique fault called casting, where the wrists release prematurely on the downswing, can position the wrists at an awkward angle at impact and also cause injury.



# 1 HELP THE WRIST HEAL

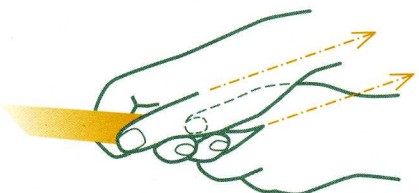
- Consult your physician or physical therapist if the pain is intense or prolonged.
- Avoid movements that make you grimace (this may require you to temporarily stop golfing).
- Ice the wrist regularly and for 15 minutes at a time.
- ALWAYS use a moist towel between your skin and the ice.
- Stretch the forearm / thumb muscles several times per day (see attached exercises).
- Anti-inflammatory medication and physical therapy treatment may help speed the healing process.
- A wrist brace may be necessary to allow you to return to golf without pain. Ask your physician or physical therapist.
- Start back at golf gradually (give yourself several days off between rounds).
- Warm up properly before hitting balls (see WARM-UP Your Golf Game booklet).
- Continue to stretch your forearm/thumb muscles during each round or practice session.
- Avoid hitting off driving range mats and try not to swing as hard when playing (i.e. use an extra club to hit your normal yardage).
- Wash your grips regularly with soap and water to help keep the rubber soft.

# 2 ADJUST YOUR TECHNIQUE

A neutral grip is extremely important for preventing wrist injuries. A neutral grip means the knuckles of the index and middle fingers of the top (left) hand and index finger of the bottom (right) hand are visible to the eyes when gripping the club at address. When the hands are placed in this manner, the line formed between the thumb and index finger of both hands will point somewhere near the nipple region of the trail shoulder.

Light grip pressure is also very important for preventing wrist injuries. Recreational golfers typically grip with more force than elite professional players. Remember: *light is right!* A lesson from a PGA instructor may be necessary to check grip placement and pressure as well as other technique factors.

Graphite shafts can also help players with weak or painful wrists. Graphite is typically 25% lighter than steel and does a better job dampening vibrations.



# 3 STRETCH & STRENGTHEN YOUR FOREARM MUSCLES

- Forearm stretching and strengthening are extremely important for preventing and treating wrist problems.
- Consult your physician or physical therapist about these and other wrist rehabilitation exercises.
- STOP if these exercises cause pain.
- Make sure your back and shoulder muscles are also strong and flexible.

# 4 THUMB & FINGER RANGE OF MOTION

Place 2 golf balls in the palm of your hand. Using just your thumb and fingers, slowly rotate the balls around each other without letting them fall to the ground. Keep manipulating the balls for about one minute before reversing the direction. Repeat 2 or 3 times.



# 5

## WRIST EXTENSOR STRETCH

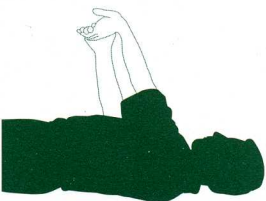
Start with your arm straight out in front of you and the palm facing downwards. Make a gentle fist then slowly pull your wrist down with your other hand. Do not let your shoulder rise up as you do this. A comfortable stretch should be felt on the top of the wrist and outside of the forearm. Hold for 10 seconds.



# 6

## CARPAL TUNNEL STRETCH

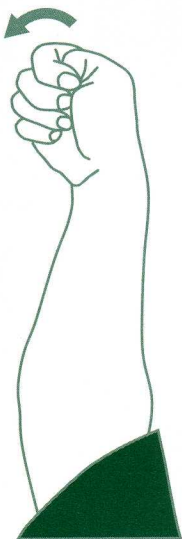
With your elbow straight out in front of you and the palm facing upwards, gently pull your fingers back with your other hand. Do not let the shoulder rise up as you do this. A comfortable stretch should be felt on the inside of the wrist and forearm. Hold for 10 seconds.



# 7

## DE QUERVAIN'S STRETCH

Bend your thumb across your palm then lightly make a fist so the thumb is inside your fingers. While keeping your forearm still, VERY SLOWLY tilt your hand down towards the ground. If you do this too quickly or forcefully, a sharp pain will result! Move your wrist until a comfortable stretch is felt at the base of the thumb near the wrist. Hold for 10 seconds and repeat 2-3 times.



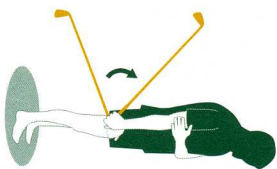
Contact a licensed **FIT<sub>fore</sub>GOLF™** facility  
if you have questions about any golf injury.

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# 8

## ULNAR DEVIATION STRENGTHENING

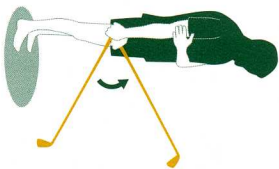
Stand as shown with your arm at your side and the golf club BEHIND your body. While keeping your arm still, bend your wrist up to lift the club. Return to the start position. Perform 2-3 sets of 10-20 repetitions on each side. Hanging a light weight onto the end of the club will make the exercise harder. Fatigue should be felt on the little finger side of the wrist and forearm.



# 9

## RADIAL DEVIATION STRENGTHENING

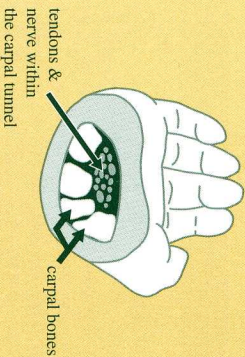
This time stand as shown with the golf club IN FRONT of your body. While keeping your arm still, bend your wrist up to lift the club. Return to the start position. Perform 2-3 sets of 10-20 repetitions on each side. Fatigue should be felt on the thumb side of the wrist and forearm.



## CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME

The wrist tunnel, for which carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) gets its name, is formed by a combination of the eight small wrist bones (carpal bones) plus a strong, fibrous band of tissue stretched across the palm surface of these bones. This creates a tight, unyielding tunnel through which 9 flexor tendons, multiple blood vessels and a very important structure called the *median nerve* must pass to reach the hand.

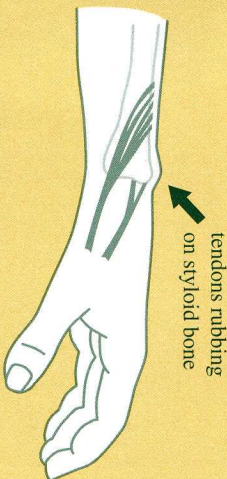
If the tendons in this area swell from overuse, pressure is exerted on the various structures within the tunnel. Nerves are very sensitive to pressure, therefore the median nerve is most affected. This results in pain (especially at night), and tingling sensations and weakness of the thumb and first two fingers.



**What about my technique?**  
The most common cause of CTS is increased grip pressure causing unnecessary tension within the finger and wrist tendons. Increased grip pressure may be the result of an inefficient grip position, slippery grips, or simply trying to hold on to the club too hard.

## DEQUERVAIN'S TENDONITIS

The two tendons affected by this condition (*abductor pollicis longus*, *extensor pollicis brevis*) are both located at the base of the thumb, near the wrist. The tendons may rub as they course around a natural bump of bone at the back of the wrist (*radial styloid*). The injury is most likely to occur at impact as the wrists uncock causing the tendons to stretch sharply across the styloid. This is associated with considerable pain.



**What about my technique?**  
The lead thumb / wrist (left side for a right handed golfer) is more commonly affected than the trail side. Gripping the club with either a "weaker" bottom hand or "stronger" top hand places the thumb of the lead hand further underneath the palm of the trail hand and increases the amount the thumb tendons stretch during impact. Players whose wrists "scoop" or "flip" through impact are also more at risk of developing DeQuervain's tendonitis.

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**FTTforeGOLF™** delivers a multifaceted program designed to help keep you injury free and add years to your game. *The better the body the better the performance!*

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