

## **Part II: Stretching lets your body perform to its potential**

By Annette M. Zaharoff, MD

In my last article, I discussed the benefits of a stretching program to improve your golf game and prevent injuries. In this article, I would like to discuss the benefits of a strengthening program to help your golf performance. With a proper golf swing, most people will be able to hit a golf ball all relatively far, regardless of their size. To hit a golf ball accurately and aggressively over 18 holes, however, requires strength and muscle endurance. Some may believe hitting buckets of balls and playing a lot of golf will develop these skills. It also takes a structured exercise and resistive training program to strengthen the golfing muscles. Hitting power is derived from the speed of your golf club at impact, which comes primarily from strengthening all muscles that help generate that power, which include the legs, hips, trunk, shoulders, upper back, and arms.

In the past, golfers along with other athletes thought a weight or resistive training program would hurt their golf swing by developing large, inflexible muscles. A balanced program however, will not lead to these results. Emphasizing lighter weights and a large number of repetitions, combined with a routine of stretching exercises every day, will increase muscle flexibility while building muscle strength and endurance.

There are a number of benefits that may be derived from training with weights on a regular basis (Refer to the following exercise diagrams). For instance, if your legs are stronger, you can get a better base as you coil and generate more power. Stronger abdominal muscles will not only help prevent low back injuries, but will help transmit the power from your legs more efficiently to increase your club head speed. Strengthening the upper back muscles will also give the body more control as you swing, enabling you to strike the ball more accurately and consistently throughout the golf round. Increased strength will also help you when you have to "muscle" the ball from a difficult lie. When you are in a sand trap or on the side of a hill, having better endurance in your leg muscles will give you a better chance to stay firmly planted and make a better shot. Added power enables golfers to swing the club more efficiently and conserve energy as a round progresses. Lastly, when your muscles are well conditioned, recovery is faster and the muscles are less prone to injury.

As with all exercise programs, if you have any special health or orthopedic issues that need to be addressed prior to starting your program, you should consult with your physician. A safe and effective strengthening program should keep your golfing muscles well balanced, not only to help your golf performance but to avoid nagging aches and pains, and injuries that can inhibit your game, especially as you get older.

### **Some Tips to Get Started**

When starting a strengthening program, keep some guidelines in mind:

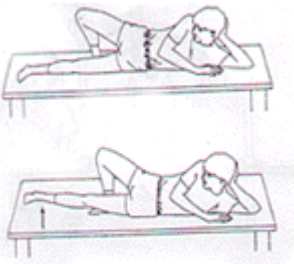
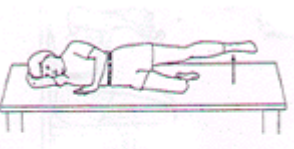
1. Prepare your body for each workout by starting with a brief warm-up session. (10 to 15 minutes) that includes light aerobics (e.g. jumping jacks, jogging in place) and your stretching exercises.
2. Start conservatively. You will develop muscle strength gradually by beginning with a minimum amount of weight resistance. Use comfort as a guide and build from there. If you are comfortable doing 10 repetitions of 5 lbs. three times, you are at the right weight. If 5 lbs. is too heavy, find the weight that feels right. A good goal for muscle endurance is to be able to complete a total of 60 repetitions of an individual exercise.

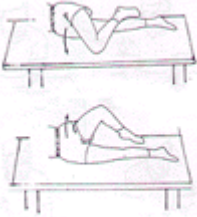

3. When you complete all you repetitions for a specific muscle group with significant fatigue, you should increase the resistance by a small amount. Make smaller increases frequently, rather than waiting longer periods and making larger weight increases.

4. Whatever your starting point, extreme soreness the following day indicates you probably did too much, lessen the intensity of the workout. Minor muscle soreness should subside within a day or two.

5. Strengthening exercises should be performed approximately three times per week. You may want to group certain body parts together and do upper body and trunk exercises on certain days alternating with leg and arm exercises on the other days. You should rest the muscles a day in between your strengthening program.

6. Concentrating on quality. Move the body part involved slowly and in a controlled manner. Allow 30 seconds in between sets, and one minute between individual exercises. This allows muscles to recover.

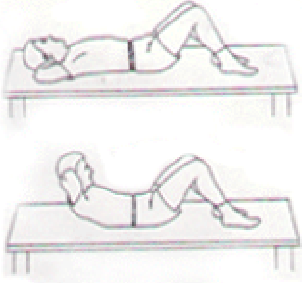
	<p><b>Leg Exercises</b></p> <p><b>1.</b> Position yourself on your side on a flat surface. Keep your head supported. Bend your upper leg at the knee, place foot flat on the floor behind lower leg. Raise lower leg a few inches off the surface, keeping opposite foot stable. Hold for a 2 count a return to resting position. Perform repetitions for this set before rolling to opposite side.</p>
	<p><b>2.</b> Position yourself on your side on a flat surface. Keep your head supported. Bend your lower leg at the knee, keeping upper leg straight. Raise upper leg off lower leg a few inches and hold for a 2 count. Perform repetitions for this set before rolling to opposite side.</p>

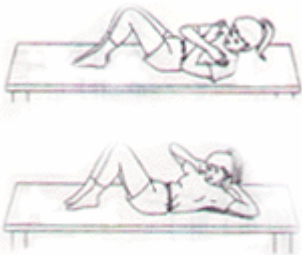
	<p><b>3.</b> Position yourself on your side with your head supported. Bend upper leg at the knee, bend same leg at the hip toward your front side, Keeping your lower leg steady, lift the upper knee, without sliding your foot. Perform repetitions for this set before rolling opposite side.</p>
	<p><b>4.</b> Lean backwards against a wall, with your heels about 18-24 inches away from the wall and shoulder width apart, feet pointing forward. Slowly slide yourself down the wall until just before your legs are in a "L" position. Hold for a 2 count and stand to your resting position. Follow the above guidelines for repetitions and sets.</p>

### Abdominal Exercises

\*General structure for abdominal exercises

- Start with 10 repetitions
- Repeat each exercise 3 times for each side, right and left
- Do exercises 3 times per week, on non-consecutive day
- Progress to 3 sets of 20 repetitions

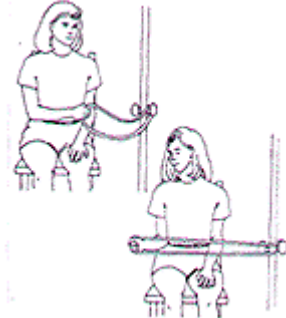
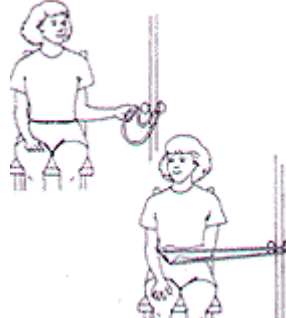
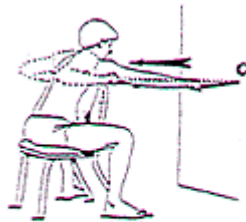
	<p><b>Abdominal Exercises</b></p> <p><b>1.</b> Lying on a flat surface, face up, bend both knees keeping feet on the ground. With your hands behind your head ( or folded over your chest) slowly lift upper body until your shoulder blades begin to clear the floor (Imagining rolling up a carpet.) Make sure your chin does not move toward your chest. Hold for a 2 count and return to resting position.</p>
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	<p><b>2.</b> Lying on a flat surface, face up, bend both knees keeping feet on the ground. With your hands behind your head ( or folded over your chest) slowly lift one shoulder off the floor and slightly twist, pointing that elbow toward the opposite knee. Hold for a 2 count and return to resting position.</p>
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### Upper Back Strengthening

\*General structure for upper back exercises

- Start with 10 repetitions
- Repeat each exercise 3 times for each side, right and left
- Do exercises 3 times per week, on non-consecutive days
- Progress to 3 sets of 20 repetitions

	<p><b>Upper Back Strengthening</b></p> <p><b>1.</b> Using tubing, and keeping your elbow in at your side, rotate arm inward across the body. Be sure to keep your forearm parallel to the floor.</p>
	<p><b>2.</b> Using tubing, and keeping your elbow in at your side, rotate arm outward away from body. Be sure to keep your forearm parallel to the floor.</p>
	<p><b>3.</b> Using tubing, wrap ends around both fists. Pull arms back while bringing shoulder blades together as if rowing a boat.</p>



**4.**

Using a light weight, with the forearm supported on a flat surface and hand in a normal "hammering" position, roll wrist clockwise and hold for a 2 count. Raise back to starting position. Repeat with wrist turning counter-clockwise.

Dr. Annette Zaharoff is a sports medicine physician specializing in the non-surgical evaluation and treatment of injuries. She maintains a private practice in San Antonio and may be reached by calling her office at (210) 616-0646 or visiting her Website [www.drZmd.com](http://www.drZmd.com)