



Guidelines for a Healthy Low Back

by Deborah L. Mullen, CSCS

Your back needs to be in top form to withstand the forces placed on it during the golf swing. Follow these guidelines to protect your back and keep you in the game.

Maintain proper alignment of the body

Poor posture throws the back out of alignment and can strain muscles and connective tissue. Proper posture consists of a slight bending of the knees, using the abdominal muscles to point the tailbone toward the floor, slightly squeezing your shoulder blades together to keep your shoulders back, and lifting your head up so it's balanced on your neck. Think of a string attached to your head which is being pulled upward. This allows the natural, gentle curves of the spine to be maintained--not too flexed or too arched.

Maintain proper body weight

Excess weight in the midsection puts extra force on the back which can strain muscles and connective tissue. Try to remember four words; *Eat less, exercise more.*

Maintain a strong and flexible back by following trunk stretching and strengthening exercises, like those found in *The Sports FitKit for Golf*.

Reduce stress

Your back is sensitive to the muscle tension created during a stress-filled day. Learn to manage your stress and take time for relaxing activities.

Perform good body mechanics

- Bend with your knees, not your back when teeing the ball, picking up clubs, etc
- Avoid excessive forward bending of the back while driving or putting
- When loading and unloading your bag from the car:
 - bend your knees
 - contract your abdominal muscles
 - keep your back upright
 - keep the bag close to your body
 - lift with your legs
 - don't twist your torso

Warm up before playing golf. A proper warm-up consists of exercises to increase blood circulation in the golfing muscles, plus stretches for these muscles. Pre-game stretching reduces the chance of injury and improves performance (pre-stretched muscles can exert more force than non-stretched muscles). What pre-game stretching won't do is increase body temperature. Since cold muscles and tendons are more prone to injury than properly warmed-up ones, stretching should *follow* 5 minutes of light exercise.

Deborah Mullen, CSCS, is the creator of "*The Sports FitKit for Golf*," an easy-to-perform golf exercise program with exercises targeting the muscles specifically used in golf. A certified strength and conditioning specialist and certified personal trainer, she has been in the fitness industry for over 10 years. Deborah was the Post-Rehabilitation Director for a local health club and fitness columnist for a local newspaper on Kauai where she gave numerous public speeches, seminars and workshops related to fitness. Currently she is owner of Simple Fitness Solutions, which sells portable fitness equipment.

For more info on "*The Sports FitKit for Golf*", check out <http://golffitnessproducts.net/fitkit.html>