

Golf Health and Fitness

Article: Golf and The Hip Replacement

The game of golf continues to grow in popularity worldwide. There are approximately 16, 000 golf courses in the United States alone, and an average age of the golfing population to be between 50 and 70 years old.

According to the American Academy Of Orthopedic Surgeons, it is projected that during the year of 2003 163,000 individuals between 45 and 74 will have a total joint replacement. It is highly likely that a large percentage of these people play golf and will need some guidance on when they can begin playing. (Mallon W.J. Liebelt RA, Bohannon MJ).

Because golf is a sport that can be played for as long as we can tolerate it, we must recognize that our bodies do age and that there are changes within our own physiology and anatomy that are inevitable such as Osteoarthritis, Degenerative Joint Disease and Avascular Necrosis (Tissue death), which eventually will lead to a joint replacement.

The prosthesis used may have a life of up to 20 years while restoring an individual's life with an increase in mobility, and elimination of pain.

According to the Hip and Knee Society it is felt that playing golf is not a contraindication to total hip arthroplasty and that the members of the society have not seen an increase in complications or revision rates in their golfing populations as compared to their non golfing populations. (Mallon WJ, Liebelt RA, Bohannon MJ).

What is a concern is that a golfer that has had a hip replacement doesn't rush back too soon. There is critical period of 3-4 months after having surgery that the individual has to be aware of. During this time the tissue is still healing and the musculature around the hip joint must be strengthened statically and dynamically and within the guidelines that the physician sets forth before attempting to play a round of golf. Dislocation during this period is also of great concern.

When the individual starts physical therapy, decreasing swelling, increasing range of motion (using precaution not to flex the hip beyond 90 degrees, no internal rotation or adduction) and sequencing movement patterns in restoring the individual's gait pattern is of first concern. Then carefully selecting the appropriate type and amount of exercises within a given time period is crucial to the healing process of the new prosthesis. (within the treating physicians guidelines).

The muscles of concern are the Quadriceps, (they are the muscles that act to extend the knee and flex the hip), the gluteals, (these muscles help to extend and abduct the hip), and of course the core, (the muscles that attach to the spine and provide stability to the pelvis and hip during weight bearing activities).

Once an individual has had an appropriate amount of healing time, strength and stability is restored, and the physician has given the O.K. to start playing again, a set of guidelines should be enforced, not only to educate the individual, but to protect the hip against injury.

Here are some guidelines that you may be of some assistance:

1). When you first start back always begin with chipping and putting, just to get the feel back and so you don't over swing. 2). When you do start to swing a club, start with an iron and do some practice swings, start with half swings, and then progress to full swings. Then do the same with a driver. 3). Never carry the golf bag over your shoulder, due to the shear forces that can be produced across the new prosthesis. 4). Wear soft rubber shoes, because they have some give to them, unlike cleats. 5). Play on the balls of your feet, instead of your heels, this is so when you turn there is less stress placed on the hip as opposed to playing on your heels. 5). Get lessons on how to turn with your shoulders and trunk in unison. The coiling that you have been used to causes a good amount of stress on the hips.

Another problem that does happen is fear. This is sometimes a big obstacle to hurdle over. Since the body remembers pain, it naturally will take some time to gain confidence in the new hip.

If you are a hip replacement candidate, or have had a hip surgically repaired, and want to resume your golf game, remember to consult your physician before playing again.

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