

GET ACTIVE. STAY ACTIVE!

I just started playing golf for the first time about a month ago. I can't finish nine holes without my back killing me. Am I just out of shape or is there something I could be doing differently?

- Gabe

Farmington Hills

By: Scott Person, PT, ATC, CSCS

Many golfers experience low back pain. This is usually a result of poor posture when addressing the ball. When standing over the ball, the knees should be slightly bent and the low back kept flat while forward bending occurs at the hips. Also, the shoulder blades should be slightly retracted or pulled back.

Back pain most often develops from standing with the knees too straight and bending forward from the back rather than the hips. This position flexes the lumbar spine, stressing the intervertebral discs, ligaments, and back muscles. Additionally, with the back rounded, or bent forward, rotational motions are lost, inhibiting the ability to twist during the backswing and to produce a rotational coil for hitting powerful golf shots.

To avoid back pain and hit longer, more consistent shots, you must set up in the proper position. Start by unlocking the knees. You should not feel like you're squatting, but a slight bend should place the knees in about 15 to 20 degrees of flexion. Secondly, you must bend at the hips rather than the back. You do this by sticking your rear out behind you. This loads the stronger gluteal muscles and takes pressure off the back. Then, pull your shoulder blades back slightly. This starting position allows the hips and thoracic

spine to perform the majority of the rotation during the backswing. You should feel your body coil over your back hip and in the middle of your back. At that point, the backswing is complete and you are ready to shift your weight slightly to the front leg and simply “unwind” the hips and back hitting a powerful, pain-free shot. This posture is recommended for all golf shots from the sand wedge to the driver. When putting, the posture should be the same but the backswing occurs only in the shoulders.

Please submit questions to our sports medicine experts at Rehabilitation Institute of Michigan by e-mailing cangelel@dmc.org. In the subject line write, “Get Active, Stay Active.” We will respond to all the questions we receive and select one each month to feature in our column.

Rehabilitation Institute of Michigan (RIM). RIM has 18 locations throughout southeast Michigan. For more information or to schedule an appointment, contact us at 1-866-4MY-REHAB or www.RIMrehab.org