

## Getting the most out of your golf game By Dr. Wes Dawkins

May 2nd may be a date that doesn't mean much to you, but ask the golfers in town and they'll tell you May 2nd is official start to the season at the Heritage Hills Golf Club.

Love it or hate it, golf has become a very popular sport. And it does have its fair share of health benefits. Golfers walk 10 km during an average round usually without even noticing. But for most golfers it's their score, not the walking, that they're concentrating on. Trying to improve your score can be a frustrating aspect of this otherwise pleasant 10 km walk. Many golfers spend valuable time and money practicing their swing or buying the latest equipment. Before resorting to that this season, try the two quick and easy approaches outlined below. They will improve your game with little or no effort on your part.

The first is stretching, or more accurately not stretching. Go to the first tee of any course and everyone will be stretching out before they tee off. That way you won't pull something, right? Wrong. Stretching right before playing actually increases the likelihood of sustaining an injury. Aside from increasing your risk of injury, stretching decreases your strength meaning less distance on your shots. How can this be? Stretching alters the positional sense in your muscles. The result is decreased muscle control, which leads to more injuries and decreased performance.

Of course being flexible is still important when trying to prevent an injury. And stretching is still the best way to remain flexible. It's when you stretch that needs to change, so don't stop stretching all together. Any other time is beneficial, but is best when you are warmed up, like after your round of golf.

The second quick fix is foot orthoses, more commonly known as orthotic inserts that are placed in your shoes. As strange as it sounds, a study in Minnesota showed that golfers wearing custom made orthotics improved club head speed by 3-5 mph which equates to an extra 9-15 yards with a driver. The orthotics also helped with the fatigue later in the round. Normally club head speed decreases late in the round but when using orthotics no decrease occurred. The likely explanation is that the orthotics improve your balance when taking a swing and reduces the fatigue that normally occurs in the legs after long periods of walking.

So before you spend hours on the driving range perfecting your swing you may want to consider trying one of these two methods first. It just might make your 10 km walk a bit more enjoyable.

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