



Photo: Kristin Streff, Lincoln Journal Star

# Amputee GOLF

## Linking Fitness and Fun on the Fairway

**Many still think of golf as a businessman's sport... the greens, and the 19th hole serving as the office where deals are done Donald Trump-style (President Trump, that is). While others see golf courses as a place to meet with family and friends on a summer's day for a relaxing game and an easy stroll around the park. Don't be fooled. While the game lends itself to all of the above, any avid golfer will tell you, in its purest form, golf is a sport.**

The aspiring golfer may be surprised to learn that the grand old game is an activity that challenges the entire body – building mobility, strength and endurance. With its focus on swinging, walking, bending, reaching and lifting, golfers need to prepare and be aware of their bodies.

Says David Lindsay, a physiotherapist at the Sports Medicine Centre, University of Calgary: "While the effortless appearance of a professional golfer's swing may fool many into thinking that no one could get hurt playing golf, many parts of the body

are moving through maximum ranges of motion and at maximum velocity during the swing. In fact," he adds, "a typical male golfer's swing reaches a speed of 100 mph in less than one fifth of a second and requires between three to four horsepower of muscle power. This equates to about 30 pounds of muscle contracting as hard as it possibly can. In terms of stress, the golf swing puts three times greater load on the spine than running."

Not to say that the links are a place for the strong of arm and back only. The beauty of the game is that it caters to enthusiasts of all ages and abilities (it may be worth noting both sexes as well – although long forgotten, the word GOLF originated as an



Photo: Tampa Bay Times



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acronym for "Gentlemen Only Ladies Forbidden"). Lindsay's numbers simply mean that fitness and a proper warm-up are just as important to golfers as it is to any other athlete or recreationalist.

"There are many different elements that contribute to a healthy level of fitness," explains Lindsay. "They include an efficient cardio-vascular system, good posture, and an optimal balance of muscle strength, joint flexibility and coordination."

Physiotherapists recommend these key tips for golfers looking to stay out on the course this summer.

- To reduce the risk of strains and pains, it's best to warm-up and stretch prior to your tee-off.
- Stretching is essential to ensure greater flexibility, strength and endurance. Areas to stretch include the neck, shoulders, wrists, lower back and legs. Stretches should be slow and controlled, and held for 10-15 seconds, to the point of gentle tension.
- Choosing the right kind of golf shoe is as essential as is ensuring proper body positioning to avoid discomfort and injury.

## Linking Amputees to the Greens

Golf is an interesting sport, one that offers unique challenges for amputees. For arm amputees, the challenge is quite simply gripping the club, while for leg amputees the main issues are balance, rhythm, and the amount of walking involved. However, with the right adaptations, there's great fun and fitness out there on the links for all amputees.



Photo: Francis Gardier, Lincoln Journal Star

For upper extremity amputees there are specific golf clubs made with the single-arm amp in mind. Your prosthetist can also make a custom device to help you hold a club, such as a metal sleeve which slides into place over the shaft of the club to provide a firm grip. A custom device can be designed whereby modified golf clubs can screw into the socket. (If you're a little hot-tempered with a tendency to throw your club, using a golf-specific prosthetic arm which attaches to your club is ideal.... by the time you get your club out of the clamp, you've had time to rethink throwing that expensive driving iron!) Always make sure you wear a good gripping golf glove to keep a hold on the club.

For leg amps, a torque absorber will help compensate for rotational and shear forces on the residual limb. A prosthetic foot with good energy return and an artificial knee that provides some stance control are options to be discussed with your prosthetist – be sure to tell him or her before your fitting that you plan to spend time golfing on the limb so that the right selection of components is made.

Shoes – spikes or spikeless – is another important decision to be made. Spiked golf shoes may pose a problem because they reduce rotation, especially when an amputee golfer is



Photo: East Coast Orthotic & Prosthetic Corp.

not wearing a torque absorber. But spiked shoes definitely help to prevent slippage, especially hard spikes over soft ones. The compromise may be a shoe with spikes on your sound foot only.

Bilateral above-knee amputees who have difficulty with balance can tee off in a number of ways: sitting on a bicycle seat on a tripod, sitting on a cushion in a wheelchair



Photo: AZCentral.com

with arms removed, sitting in a golf cart with a swivel seat, standing or leaning against the cart. If walking the course is too difficult, rent a motorized golf cart.

## GET IN THE GAME

**Canadian Amputee Golf Association: The CAGA helps amputees get started in the sport, and organizes tournaments throughout Can**

**Alberta Amputee volunteers who is enhanced through amputees. [www](#)**

**British Columbia: Organization: Organized peer support for amputation. [ww](#)**

**ParaGolf Ontario for Ontario amputees fitness and/or c**

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