

Dr. Paul Callaway's Golf Health and Fitness Tips

“How to Manage and Prevent Golfer’s Shoulder”

Common physical stress points in golf are the shoulders. Specifically, the group of four muscles that typically become strained and then inflamed as a result of playing golf are collectively called the “rotator cuff”. These muscles help to stabilize the ball and socket joint of the shoulder as well as contribute to rotation and elevation of the arm during the full golf swing.

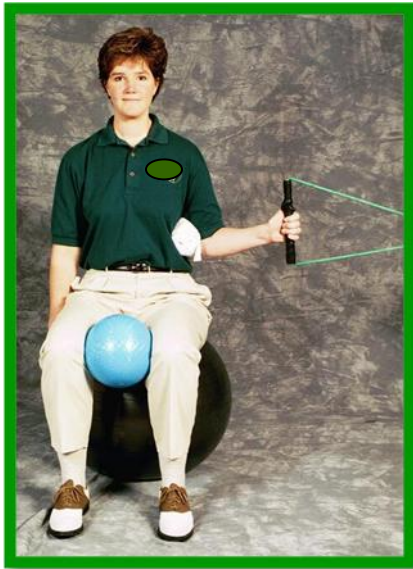
To protect your rotator cuff and to help improve the overall power in your swing, try these three strengthening exercises. Perform each exercise every other day for 4-6 weeks and you should be able to notice improved strength in your shoulders and added distance and control in your game.

Internal Rotation

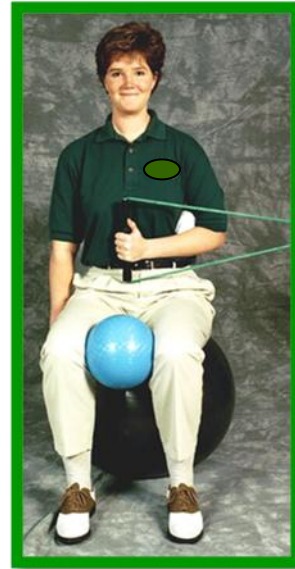
The first rotator cuff strengthening exercise is aimed at the rotator cuff muscle called the subscapularis. The primary functions of the subscapularis muscle are to stabilize the front of the shoulder joint and inwardly rotate the shoulder. It is the most active of the four rotator cuff muscles during the full golf swing.

To strengthen the subscapularis, begin by placing a resistance band or tubing at shoulder height (sitting or standing) in a closed doorway with a straight-spine posture and lightly squeezing the shoulder blades. With your left arm at your side, bend your left elbow to 90° and rotate your shoulder outward comfortably to its end-range. Move away from the doorway while gripping the resistance band/tubing in your right hand until you feel slight tension in the resistance band/tubing (see picture #1). Then, pull your left hand to your stomach by rotating your left shoulder inwardly (see picture #2). Be sure to keep your chest facing forward (do not twist your shoulders) while you pull your arm inward. This will isolate the muscle of the rotator cuff. Hold the end position for two seconds and slowly release to the starting position in four seconds. The entire

repetition should last approximately six seconds. Repeat the exercise for 1-2 sets of 10 repetitions. Then, repeat the exercise with the right shoulder.



Picture #1

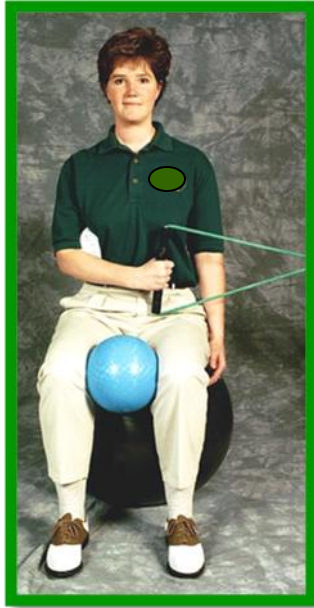


Picture #2

External Rotation

The second rotator cuff exercise is aimed at strengthening the two rotator cuff muscles called the infraspinatus and teres minor. The primary function of the infraspinatus and teres minor muscles is to outwardly rotate the shoulder. It is the most active in the right shoulder (for a right handed golfer) during the follow-through do help decelerate the arms.

To strengthen the infraspinatus and teres minor muscles, begin as with the first exercise, by placing a resistance band or tubing at shoulder height (sitting or standing) in a closed doorway with a straight-spine posture and lightly squeezing the shoulder blades. With your right arm at your side, bend your right elbow to 90° and rotate your shoulder inwardly to its end-range so your fist is resting on your stomach. Move away from the doorway while gripping the resistance band/tubing in your right hand until you feel slight tension in the resistance band/tubing (see picture #3). Then, rotate your right arm outward (away from your stomach) until you feel a comfortable degree of resistance (see picture #4). Be sure to keep your chest facing forward (do not twist your shoulders) while you pull your arm outward. This will isolate the muscles of the rotator cuff. Hold the end position for two seconds and slowly release to the starting position in four seconds. The entire repetition should last approximately six seconds. Repeat the exercise for 1-2 sets of 10 repetitions. Then, repeat the exercise with the left shoulder.



Picture #3



Picture #4

Paul Callaway, PT, PhD is the Director of Golf Fitness at the Cantigny Golf Academy in Wheaton, Il. He was the first Director of Physical Therapy on the PGA Tour and has specialized in golf-specific fitness training, performance enhancement and injury-prevention for the past 25 years. If you have questions for him about this article or any other topic related to golf fitness and performance, he can be reached via email at paul@callawaygolffitness.com, by calling 630-567-7572 or by visiting www.callawaygolffitness.com .