



Dr. Paul Callaway's Golf Health and Fitness Tips

“Straighten Your Spine for a Bigger Turn”

Achieving a full shoulder turn is one of the essential ingredients to hitting the golf ball a long way. The design of the human spine ideally allows golfers to rotate the most from the middle (thoracic) spine.

However, if the middle spine is overly bent ... forward or to the side ... at address (see Picture 1), then it can't rotate properly during either the backswing or follow-through. Golfers, therefore, with poor address posture will have restricted shoulder turns and difficulty achieving maximum distance in their shots.



Picture 1: Excessive forward bend (left); Excessive side bend (right)

The reason why so many golfers have difficulty achieving a proper spine posture at address and full rotational flexibility in their shoulder turn is because of tightness and/or muscle imbalances in their chest and spine.

To help achieve proper posture at address and then to achieve a full shoulder turn for maximum length, here are **three stretching exercises** that promote a straighter posture at address and improved rotational flexibility in your spine.

Chest and Shoulder Stretch

Begin this stretch by lying on the floor with your feet resting over a chair so your hips and knees are comfortably bent to 90 degrees. Place a small towel roll (1-2 inches in diameter) horizontally across your middle back about shoulder blade level. Rest your arms out about 60-80 ° from your sides with your elbows bent to 90°. From this position, allow your chest, shoulders and middle spine to relax until you feel like all the tightness has released (3-5 minutes).

Side Stretch

Begin this stretch by lying on your left side over a rolled up pillow. Reach your right arm overhead and straighten your right leg while supporting your head with your left arm and bending your left hip and knee. Hold this stretch for 3-5 minutes or until you experience a complete release of any tightness in your right side. Then, slowly come out of this stretch position and repeat the stretch on the other side.

Spine Rotation Stretch

Start this stretch on your back with your hips and knees bent and your feet rested on the floor. Reach your arms out to the sides about 60-80° and bend your elbows to 90 degrees. Keeping your knees together, allow both legs to slowly rotate to your left until you feel a comfortable stretch in your right hip and spine. Hold this position for 3-5 minutes or until you feel a complete release of the stretch feeling. Then, slowly come out of this stretch position and repeat the stretch in the other direction.

Remember to check with your physician and/or personal fitness professional before performing any of these exercises to make sure that they are right for you and stop immediately to contact them should you feel any discomfort during or after performing any exercises.

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