

WRISTY BUSINESS

PROTECT THESE CRITICAL JOINTS

Considering the punishment your wrists endure because of golf – helping you swing the club through thick grass, plugged bunker lies and two-hour grind sessions on the range – it's amazing more golfers don't suffer hand injuries. "Actually, they do," says Dave Phillips, golf-and-fitness expert at the Titleist Performance Institute. "They're fairly common, and you typically don't come back quickly from one."

The forces applied to the hands throughout the swing can cause soft-tissue inflammation or sprains, nerve damage, or fractures to the eight tiny carpal bones of the joint. The most easily injured is the hamate bone on the pinky side of your glove hand at the wrist. Here Phillips offers a plan for better on-course wrist safety, and Golf Digest fitness adviser Ben Shear provides some exercises to protect these joints.

— Ron Kaspriske

GET FITTED

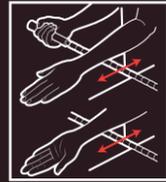
Grips come in four diameters, according to Golf Pride, and you can use tape to vary the thickness even more. Unfortunately, most average golfers don't realise this and simply use the grips that came on the clubs. If your grip is too small, the tendency is to hold it in the palms (see No. 2) and/or too tightly. Either stresses the wrists a lot.

CHECK YOUR GRIP

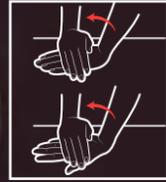
Holding the club too high across the palm of your glove hand (sometimes wearing a hole in your glove) puts the club in a weaker position at impact, increasing the risk of injury. Regrip the club in the last three fingers of the glove hand instead. This stabilises the club at impact and limits the stress on the wrist.

LOOK AT YOUR DIVOT HOLES

Hit a shot off the turf and notice the damage. Is the divot hole deep and pointing left of your target? If so, your angle of attack is steep and not very "wrist friendly." Shallow your approach into the ball by trying to take a thinner slice of turf that points at the target or even a little right of it.



1. Forearm massage
 › Slide both sides of your forearms up and down a massage stick or club while applying pressure.



2. Wrist stretch
 › Stack hands on a flat surface. Hinge the bottom hand's wrist until the arm is upright. Flip hand over. Repeat.



3. Putter extensions
 › Hold your puttershaft upright with one hand. Lower until parallel to the ground. Raise and repeat.



4. Putter rotations
 › Rotate the puttershaft left and right until parallel to the ground on each side. Repeat back and forth.



TAKE THIS TEST

› Hinge your glove hand up and down as shown. Difficult to do in either direction? Does the wrist look cupped? Answer yes to either question, and the exercises above will help improve mobility.

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