



Golf

A guide for heart patients



**Association
of Chartered
Physiotherapists
in Cardiac
Rehabilitation**

Golf is very good for maintaining and improving health and fitness and is an enjoyable, social way to keep active outdoors.

What are the benefits?

- Increase and maintain your stamina
- Increase and maintain your muscle strength and joint suppleness
- Improve your co-ordination and balance
- Improve your confidence and well being
- May help you to maintain a healthy body weight and shape.

When is it safe to start?

This will depend on your own circumstances and specific cardiac condition. It is recommended you have an assessment with a cardiac exercise professional who will provide advice and guidance.

For example:

If you have had Open-Heart surgery

- You should wait at least twelve weeks to ensure good healing of the breast bone.

If you have a pacemaker or implantable cardioverter device (ICD)

- Dependent on your device you may need to wait six weeks to allow the leads to settle.

How fit do I need to be?

If you can walk up an incline or a flight of stairs comfortably your fitness should allow you to start playing golf. However, you will need to take into account the following considerations: the course terrain, how long it will take you to complete your game, and possibly using a buggy in the short or long term.

How can I get in shape?

- Attend cardiac rehabilitation exercise sessions
- Walk regularly and build up distance and inclines gradually on differing terrains
- As with any activity, 'start low and go slow'
- Practice walking your course
- Start with the driving range or a putting green
- Play less holes to begin with or start on a flatter course
- Start with a half swing and build up the length and speed of your swing.

Should I include a warm up and cool down?

- You should include gentle walking and gentle shoulder movement as it is important to prepare your heart and body for activity
- Practice your swing initially without a golf club
- Start and finish at a slower pace.



How should I feel?

- You should feel comfortable and be able to continue with the activity
- It is okay to be slightly out of breath as long as you can still talk in full sentences. If not, slow down
- If you are exhausted the following day you have probably overdone it and need to reduce the length of game next time by playing fewer holes.

What other things should I consider?

- Do not allow yourself to be pressured by other golfers into rushing your game or walking faster than you feel comfortable to do. Pace yourself and rest as required
- If you are struggling to keep up with the pace of play you should reduce the intensity of the game. Try to ensure your partner /opponent plays at your skill level
- Only play when you are feeling well
- If you have a pacemaker or ICD you may need to alter your technique to avoid overstretching your arm during the follow through phase of your swing to protect the leads
- Dress appropriately for the weather: remember the heart works harder on cold and windy days as well as when it is hot and humid
- Do not hold your breath whilst lifting equipment or whilst concentrating on your swing
- Take care when lifting your golf equipment, initially you may need to carry less clubs or use an electric trolley or buggy
- You may need to slow down if you are walking up an incline
- If you have to stand still for long keep your feet moving gently or wriggle your toes to help the circulation
- If you feel lightheaded or dizzy after bending, consider using a golf ball retriever.

Stop playing if you experience any chest discomfort, palpitations, dizziness or light-headedness. If the symptoms do not go away promptly with rest and/or your GTN spray/tablets, seek medical advice as soon as possible



This guidance is based on the available evidence and expert advice

Produced by the Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Cardiac Rehabilitation
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This leaflet is not intended to replace the advice that your doctor or cardiac rehabilitation team give you based on their expert knowledge of your condition

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