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Is Your Golf Swing Setting You Up for Shoulder Injury?

Just like fingerprints, each golf swing is unique. All movements-walking, running, swinging a golf club-that require activating more than one muscle involve an intricate balance and control of our bodies to result in the final product called the kinetic chain.

This **kinetic chain** involves coordinating all of the body's soft tissue (muscle, ligaments, and tendons), the nervous system (brain, spinal cord, and peripheral nerves), and the skeletal system (bones and joints) to position the body in the proper alignment to perform any task in the most efficient manner possible. We each develop our own pattern of control as we learn to hold our heads up, progressing to sitting, walking, running, and ultimately more complex movements such as the golf swing. If we develop a pattern of movement or a habit is ingrained that is inefficient, the other systems are forced to compensate and adjust. These compensations and adjustments can result in tissue overload, reduced performance, and ultimately predictable patterns of injury.

As the shoulder is positioned toward the end of the **kinetic chain** and relies almost entirely on soft tissue (muscles, ligaments, tendons, etc.) and body positioning for stability it is particularly prone to injury due to a weak link in the **kinetic chain** elsewhere. For instance, we have treated many patients for shoulder injuries that originally started because of a hip, knee, back or other problem further down the **kinetic chain**.

This is why changing your golf swing or copying someone else's golf swing can be very difficult. Countless professional golfers over the years have ruined their careers by trying to make drastic changes to their golf swings. But don't lose hope; our prescription to avoid shoulder injury and improve your golf game is to start from the beginning. The golf swing is best built from the ground up. We recommend correcting or improving deficiencies in your **kinetic chain** as the best place to start.

Traditional weight training or fitness programs often fall short because they aren't able to identify and correct these deficiencies and compensations. Knowledge is power so finding a true expert to evaluate your movements and identify the deficiencies in your **kinetic chain** is the first step. Once the correct diagnosis is established, the necessary and appropriate steps to restore your **functional strength** can be taken helping you not only **improve your performance now** but also avoid injury in the future.

Tiger Woods is the most notable example of the significant benefits an enlightened functional strengthening program can provide for everyone-a solid base to make the most of your natural talents. Many communities now have golf professionals that offer programs that start with an evaluation of your movements, followed by a prescription to correct any deficiencies and improve your functional strength, before even considering working on your golf swing. So instead of starting with golf lessons to change your swing, do yourself a favor and focus on improving the **cause** not the **effect**.

For more information visit us at www.TheShoulderCenter.com

Dr. Agrawal, an avid golfer, is Medical Director of the The Shoulder Center in Indiana.

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