



Get Hip for More Club Speed

A common problem in many amateur golfers swings is not enough hip clearance during their downswing. When the leading hip does not rotate early or completely enough then it tends to slide toward the target instead. This typically results in a breakdown or early folding of the leading elbow (“chicken wing”) and wrist during impact and the early release phase of the swing which then causes diminished clubhead speed (see picture #1). The faster and more completely that the leading leg (hip and knee) straightens and rotates the quicker the other hip will rotate toward the target. The additional speed that this hip motion generates in a golf swing is a tremendous power source for golfers who hit the ball a long way (see picture #2).

If the leading hip is not rotating fast enough, it usually stems from poor hip and leg rotational flexibility, strength, stability and/or balance. If your PGA/LPGA instructor has diagnosed this problem in your swing then consult a fitness professional with golf-specific expertise. They will be able to evaluate you to determine your individual physical needs and how they relate to your swing motion. They will also be able to recommend a customized set of exercises to help you improve your areas of physical weakness so your pro can then more quickly and easily and safely facilitate a change in your swing. Until then, here are some sample exercises that could be helpful to you if you are found to have some flexibility, strength, stability and/or balance challenges in your front hip and leg.

Hip Rotation Stretch

This first exercise is aimed at gaining the needed hip rotational flexibility to improve the amount of hip rotation available for ideal impact and early release phases of your swing. To begin, if you are a right hand golfer, lie on your back and place your left hand on the front of your left hip (if you are left hand golfer place your right hand on your right hip) and cross your left foot over your right knee (see picture #3). Place your right hand on your left thigh and slowly pull it down and over making certain to keep your left hip down with support from your left hand (see picture #4). When performed properly, you will begin to feel a gentle stretch in the side and back of your left hip. Hold this stretch comfortably for **3-5 minutes** or until the stretch feeling gradually melts completely away. Perform this stretch every day, pulling the left leg more down and across your body as you are able each stretching session and you should begin to notice improved flexibility within 3-5 days.

Single Leg Bridge and Roll

This exercise is wonderful because it promotes better hip speed through a combination of improved hip and leg strength, stability and balance all at once. To perform this exercise, an unstable base like a large, inflated, gymnastic ball is required. These exercise balls are easily found in most health clubs for general use or can be purchased for in-home use in

most sports/exercise equipment stores at a very affordable price. When you have found a ball, begin the exercise by lying on your back with both feet rested on the ball (see picture #5). Contract your lower abdominal muscles to flatten your lower back into the floor and then lift from your hips and legs until you have bridged your pelvis several inches off the ground. Do not bridge too high off the floor or you will lose your ability to maintain a neutral, flat back and you could feel lower back pain. From the bridged position, lift your right foot off the ball and balance on the ball with your left hip and leg (see picture #6). When you have mastered this, roll the ball away from you by straightening your left hip and knee (see picture #7). Hold this position for one breath and then pull the ball back with your left leg. Rest down to the floor and repeat this exercise for up to two sets of ten repetitions. Eventually, as you grow stronger and more balanced in your left hip and leg, you will be able to perform multiple repetitions (up to 10) without a resting between each ball roll.

If you try these exercises and you find them to be too challenging or uncomfortable, **do not continue**, until you have consulted with your physician. All exercises for golf should be customized to your needs after a proper evaluation.

If you have questions about this article or want to find out more about how a **Body Balance for Performance®** customized fitness training program can help your game, please call 800-473-6211 or visit www.fitgolf.com.