



## Golf Health and Fitness Tips

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### **Golf-Specific Fitness Training for Kids**

Tiger Woods' explosive success and worldwide popularity has stimulated a tremendous youth movement in golf called "Tigermania". Besides the "be like Tiger" attitude stimulating many children to play golf, many adult golfers with children have recognized the benefits of Tiger's early exposure to the game provided by his father, Earl Woods. Consequently, thousands of parents are attempting to duplicate similar opportunities for their children hoping that they too might have another child golf prodigy in their midst.

Although the odds weigh heavily against most children turning out to be another Tiger Woods there truly are significant benefits to learning golf earlier than later in life. It is much easier for a youngster from the beginning to develop the proper, golf-specific physical characteristics required to build a golf swing that produces optimal and safe performance results for a lifetime. In contrast, adults attempting to learn golf for the first time may find their bodies to be less naturally cooperative to the task of learning this complex game.

Most children have not yet developed the same degree of physical challenges that typically plague many adult swing performances. Young golfers are generally more flexible than older golfers but they should be evaluated, nonetheless, to determine any areas of inflexibility and/or hypermobility (excess flexibility) in the golf-specific muscle groups and joints of the spine, hips, shoulders, elbows and wrists. Poor posture and balance, muscle weakness and joint instability are most commonly problematic for young golfers. These physical characteristics should be specifically evaluated for each child before the purchase of equipment and before full swing instruction begins.

If a young golfer does have identified physical imbalances, however, their youthful, elastic bodies are more easily corrected with appropriate golf-specific exercises. It is never too late to start a golf-specific fitness-training program. More importantly, however, it is never too early to begin preparing young golfers for the stresses that golf can place on a growing body. The longer golfers wait to get started the more difficult it is to experience rapid physical changes and improvement in swing performance potential. Posture, balance, strength and conditioning exercises that are integrated with professional instruction should be started as soon as possible.

As soon as a parent recognizes their child is showing interest in the game there are creative and fun ways to begin promoting physical training into their golf learning

process that will facilitate performance and safety. Training equipment like gymnastic balls and foam rolls are excellent for posture and balance training. Light free weights and/or surgical tubing are most appropriate for young bodies whose bony growth plates have not fully closed. A maximum of 1-2 sets of 8-12 repetitions of strengthening exercises should be performed no more than every other day. Naturally, all exercises for juniors should be designed by a trained professional and supervised by a parent (adult) whenever possible.

Improperly fit equipment (too long, heavy or stiff) in addition to excess practice of full swings before a young golfer is physically prepared can place inappropriate stress on growing muscles and joints plus it can create bad swing habits that can be difficult to break later in life. Many of the common swing flaws like over-the-top, casting, reverse pivoting and lateral swaying begins at an early age from the compensations resulting from immature physical development.

To summarize, getting youngsters plugged into fitness-training programs to play golf safely and with maximum success will ensure that the current “Tigermania” youth movement will not be a fad but a trend that continues to bring millions of new golfers to the game that can be enjoyed for a lifetime.

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](http://www.fitgolf.com).