

# Warm-Up and Win

By David Ostrow  
*Body Balance for Performance*<sup>®</sup>

It is a widely accepted fact among experts in fitness and performance that prior to every athletic activity a proper *pre-activity* warm-up period is essential. Golfers who make it a habit to spend several minutes warming up significantly improve their chances to perform well early in their round, finish strong at the end of their round, and reduce their chance of injury.

The benefits of a good warm-up, according to David Ostrow, a physical therapist and owner of Body Balance for Performance, should provide the motivation to arrive at the course early enough to do a pre-round stretch before tee time. These benefits include increased flexibility for a more complete turn, improved muscular efficiency for power and control, extra club head speed and distance, and reduced injury potential.

The stretching sequence of a pre-golf warm-up should include exercises that will prepare the muscles that will be used during the golf swing. "It's important to warm up *golf specific* muscles," Ostrow said.

To begin with, a general full body warm-up should be performed for two to three minutes before stretching. Take one or more irons and start with slow, partial swing motions gradually building to faster, full swing motions. This will help adequately increase the body's temperature to prepare the golf muscles to be more specifically stretched during the warm-up sequence.

Each of the following stretches should be held for approximately 15-30 seconds. The stretch should be comfortable, and there should be no bouncing or lunging during the stretch. Repeat each exercise three to five times and be sure to keep breathing.

## **Squat and Reach**

This exercise is designed to help stretch the lower back, hips, spine, chest, and shoulders. Hold a club vertically in front of you on the ground with both hands placed on the top of the grip, comfortably widen your stance and bend from your hips and knees as you then sag your chest down toward the ground. Continue to reach and stretch until you feel a comfortable stretch in your lower back, hips, legs, chest, shoulders, and arms.

## **Standing Reach and Side Bends**

This exercise will help increase flexibility in the chest, shoulders, hips, and spine. To perform this warm-up stretch, stand with your feet shoulder width apart and reach a club over head, slightly bend at the hips and knees. Contract the lower abdominal muscles and rotate the pelvis into a neutral "tucked" position so the belt line is parallel to the floor. Then reach a club with both hands as high as possible over your head until you feel a

gentle stretch in your chest and under your shoulders. Then, maintain your neutral tucked pelvis, bent hips and knees and slowly side bend to your right until you feel a comfortable stretch in your left side. Repeat this stretch several times. Repeat the stretch to the left.

### **Trunk Rotation Stretch**

This stretch is designed to help warm-up the muscles of the spine and shoulders to improve the ability to make a full turn during the backswing and follow-through. To begin this stretch, start with hips, knees, and pelvis in the same position as for the previous “standing reach and side bend” exercise. Then reach your left arm across the front of your chest keeping your left shoulder blade squeezed down and back, your left elbow straight and your palm up. Then, with your right hand placed just above your left elbow, pull your left arm across your chest while you rotate your upper trunk as far as possible to the right. Repeat this stretch several times. Perform the stretch in both directions.

### **Standing Forward Lunge**

This exercise is designed to stretch the muscles and joints of the hips and legs. To perform this exercise stand with a club held behind your spine, contract the lower abdominal muscles and straighten the upper back simultaneously. The entire length of the spine is as flat as possible against the shaft of the club. Then, while keeping the club shaft vertical, step forward with your right leg, keeping your left knee straight and your left heel down on the ground until you feel a comfortable stretch in your left calf and ankle as well as in the front of your left hip. Repeat this stretch several times, repeat the stretch on the other side.

“Remember,” Ostrow said, “a proper pre-golf warm-up can provide the needed flexibility to hit the ball longer and more consistently from the beginning to the end of the round. It will also significantly reduce the chances of injury.”

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