

Andy North Offers Tips for Your Golf Game – and Well-Being

Whether you've played golf a long time or have recently taken it up, you might be looking for ways to fine-tune your technique. Two-time U.S. Open champion and Physicians Mutual customer Andy North offers a few tips that might improve your game – and more important, could keep you on

the course for years to come, enjoying the pastime you love.

Andy's tips fit into five categories: **Exercise, Stretch, Drives, Iron Shots, and Putting & Short Game.**

EXERCISE

Get your doctor's OK before beginning any exercise or stretching regimen, especially if you have a sedentary lifestyle or a medical condition.

Walk.

"You need to walk a lot to keep your legs strong," Andy says. "Aim for between 5,000 and 10,000 steps a day."

Walking not only strengthens your legs, it can help treat illnesses such as diabetes and high blood pressure, and also improve mood and mobility. Measure your steps with a pedometer or physical activity tracker.

Strengthen your core.

Your core (the muscles of your hips, pelvis, abdomen and back) initiates nearly every movement in your body. When you stand, turn, maintain your balance, carry something – it all begins from the center of your body and moves out to your arms and legs.

"It's so important to strengthen your core," Andy says. "Strong core muscles can help make it easier to do physical activities, including golf. Many exercises can help you do this – sit-ups and planks are just two."



"Exercising and stretching are more important than specific golf tips. The stamina and strength you get from regular exercise and stretching can help you play golf for as long as possible, as well as do all the other activities you enjoy."

– Andy North, two-time U.S. Open champion and Physicians Mutual customer

- A **standard plank** is essentially a push-up in which you keep your body in the “up” position for several seconds, keeping your abs tight and your back flat. There are several variations to just this one exercise.

There are also core-strengthening exercises you can do from a chair.

- One is called **crunching knee raises**. With your hands at your sides or behind your head, sit tall in your chair and lift one bent leg at a time toward your chest. At the same time, curl your upper body down to meet your knee. Hold for a moment, then release and repeat with the other leg.

Practice swinging a golf club (or two).

“Swing a club,” Andy says. “Swing two at a time. Do it several times a day. That will help stretch and strengthen your body and arms.”

STRETCH

Do hamstring stretches.

“Bad backs can be caused by tight hamstrings,” Andy said. “Do some hamstring stretches.”

Your hamstring muscles are a group of three muscles that run along the back of your thigh from your hip to just below your knee.

- To **gently stretch your hamstrings**, sit on a firm surface like a couch and extend one leg onto the surface. Slowly lean forward and reach for your thigh, knee or ankle – whichever you can reach without pain. Hold for several seconds and then do the same with your other leg. Remember – stretching shouldn’t be painful. Don’t overdo it.

Stretch your back.

“Two ways of stretching my back that have worked for me is a floor exercise called ‘cats and dogs,’” Andy says, “and a sitting exercise that can help increase turning ability.”

- With the **cats and dogs exercise**, get on your hands and knees on the floor. Raise your head while arching your back as if pushing your spine toward the floor (like a dog sitting). Then,

lower your head and round your back (like a cat stretching). Hold each position for a few seconds. Don’t bend your elbows or rock forward or backward.

- To help **increase your turning ability**, sit on the edge of a couch or bed. Cross your arms and slowly turn one direction as far as you can. Then do the same for the other direction.

Work on your shoulders.

“There are several ways to loosen your shoulders,” Andy says. “One is arm circles.”

While standing up straight – which helps increase circulation and blood flow – stand perpendicular

next to a wall, making big, slow circles with one arm. Get as close to the wall as you can, coming into contact with it if possible. Repeat a few times, then turn the other way to rotate the opposite arm.

DRIVES

Hit in the middle of the clubface.

“When it comes to driving, it’s not about how far you can drive,” Andy says, “but can you put your ball on the fairway?”

Andy advises hitting the ball with the middle of the clubface, which should help your drives be longer and straighter. Keep your balance, and swing a bit easier than you normally do.

IRON SHOTS

Hit down on the ball.

“The more you beat the ball into the ground, the higher it will go,” Andy says. “Make a divot past the ball, not in front of it. Don’t try to scoop or lift it into the air – the loft of the club will make the ball go into the air.”



PUTTING & SHORT GAME

To improve your putting ...

- “Work on speed control,” Andy says. “If you have good speed control and the back of your left hand goes toward the hole, you’ll be OK.”

(Left-handed golfers will want the back of their right hand going toward the hole.)

To improve your short game ...

- Andy says to practice hitting shots at certain distances – 20 yards, 30 yards, 40 yards, etc. Basically, learn how to hit a specific distance.
- And don’t be afraid to practice bunker and chip shots. You’ll be able to get out of a bunker easier if it happens during a round.



We thank Andy North for these fitness tips and golf pointers that can help improve your game – and your life.



Physicians
Mutual®

Insurance for all of us.®