



Questions/Answers for Club Golfers

Whilst your golf pro can say "swing this way", you won't be able to if your body can't physically do it. By doing Pilates, you can make corrections to your body; strengthen the core, increase flexibility, build stability in the pelvis and shoulder girdles, and balance both sides of the body, all of which will allow you to hit the ball farther, straighter and more accurately. But these are just some of the benefits that Pilates can have on your golf game.

The most successful way to reduce your handicap and improve your consistency is not to spend hundreds of pounds on new clubs. It is the golfer that plays the game, and not his equipment. As long as the clubs are capable, the biggest results can be achieved by changing the qualities of the golfer. Pilates has been used by professional golfers such as Tiger Woods for many years, and golfcorestrength Pilates is now giving club golfers an opportunity to reap the benefits as well.

Golfcorestrength Pilates offer group sessions or one-on-one sessions using golf-specific Pilates methods via a world-wide network of fully qualified instructors.

Why is Pilates so good for golf, why is everyone talking about "core strength", and how can golfcorestrength Pilates help?

+ So what exactly is Pilates, and how and when do I need to practise it?

Pilates is a full body conditioning program, developed in the 1920's by Joseph Pilates. This revolutionary program focuses on training the mind and body to work together more effectively and efficiently. Pilates can transform the way the body looks, feels, and performs. It incorporates modern exercise science and rehabilitation principles, eliminating contraindicated movements while emphasizing neutral alignment, core stability and peripheral mobility. It builds strength without excess bulk, creating a sleek, toned body and a flat abdomen. It teaches body awareness, good posture and easy, graceful movement, and improves flexibility, agility and economy of motion. Pilates is a safe form of movement making it optimal for clients that need to rehabilitate injuries.

Pilates exercises train several muscle groups at once in smooth, continuous movements. By developing proper technique, you can actually re-train your body to move in safer, more efficient patterns of motion - invaluable for injury recovery, good posture and optimal health. No other exercise system is so gentle on the body while giving it a challenging workout. Many of the exercises are performed in reclining or sitting positions, and most are low impact and partially weight bearing.

Golfers can find general Pilates classes at gyms intimidating and inconvenient, and typically the class size is too big for the instructor to give individual attention which is vital to ensure the exercises are being done correctly. golfcorestrength brings golf-specific techniques to your golf club or your home in one-on-one or small group classes. The methods golfcorestrength Pilates teach can benefit both men and women, and no previous experience of fitness classes is required.

Pilates exercises should ideally be done at least twice a week, with additional stretches for a few minutes every day, and before, during and after playing golf. All Pilates movements are appropriate for the young or old, fit or unfit. They do not require great flexibility (although your flexibility will of course improve). All the movements have several different levels making them appropriate for every type of body. golfcorestrength Pilates will give you a tailor-made program to help maximise the benefits to you.

+ How does Pilates enable golfers to hit the ball further and straighter?

Pilates will teach you to stabilise your spine and the muscles that support it. This will in turn improve your posture, swing power and accuracy. Pilates builds precision and fluidity with power and focus. Pilates is a functional training system, allowing the joints, muscles and nervous system to all work in

harmony. This generates efficiency in movement, and the power necessary to hit the ball straighter and longer. Pilates improves hip mobility, which is vital to a good swing. The pelvis links the upper and lower body. The external rotation required in the swing creates stresses, so hip mobility and stability are essential.

Pilates also builds balance. If you improve your sense of balance, this will work with a good posture to produce a good shot. If you have better balance whilst still at address and whilst moving through the swing, this will allow you to stabilise your pelvis and shoulder girdle thus increasing the chance of a better swing.

+ How can working with golfcorestrength Pilates make my game more consistent?

The one thing that many golfers lack is consistency. We have all experienced a perfect shot when our minds are clear, our swing is effortless, and everything seems to come together. We often think at such time "if only I could hit the ball like that more often". Whilst we have all played great shots or scored well on several holes, we often mess up on other shots during our round. We've all wondered if only we could play every shot or hole like our best ones, so what is an important factor in this inconsistency? The answer is postural alignment. If you start a swing with a poor posture, then you will more often than not end it in a poor posture. Additionally, if you are mechanically inefficient, then you will fatigue your stabilising muscles which will further affect your posture. Put simply, bad postural conditioning will tire your muscles. Even if you started your round with an adequate posture, after several holes you will be fatigued and your muscle recruitment pattern will be different every time you swing the club, and this leads to the inconsistency that most club golfers suffer. golfcorestrength Pilates can bring truly remarkable changes to your posture and your golf.

+ How can Pilates improve my endurance and energy levels so I can play for longer?

Regular Pilates practice energizes your body and increases its endurance by improving your strength and flexibility, as well as your breathing, circulation, and posture. Proper breathing is central to every Pilates exercise. Joseph Pilates believed that you had to clean your lungs with every breath, completely emptying them of "stale" air before refilling them. Deep breathing "oxygenates" your system, sending oxygen coursing through your arteries and throughout all your body tissues.

Your ability to feel energized and refreshed, however, requires more than a good set of lungs and a strong heart. If you drag those healthy organs and systems around in a slumped, misaligned body, you won't keep them healthy for long. When you stand erect and strong, you elongate and align your body's framework, and that helps to pull your internal organs in line and give them plenty of room to function as they should.

A properly erect stance and seated posture allow your lungs to expand fully. Your abdominal muscles naturally pull in, giving better support to your lower back. Your spine is strong and evenly balances the weight of your body. By directly contributing to your breathing, circulation, carriage, stance, and grace of movement, Pilates builds endurance and helps you feel more energetic and relaxed.

+ I see the term "core" referred to in golfing magazines, but what and where is my core?

The core is the deepest layer of abdominal muscles, and consists of your diaphragm, transversus abdominis, pelvic floor, and multifidus. Historically, these muscles were never mentioned and rarely trained, as it was the "global" muscles near the surface that got all the attention. Joseph Pilates realised this fact as long ago as the First World War. Everyone has caught up with his teachings, and the importance of the core is now fully appreciated. Talk about strong abdominal muscles, and most people will think of a six-pack. Whilst Pilates exercises will give your six-pack a good hard work out as part of a holistic training program, these are superficial surface muscles, and whilst they have an important role to play, they will not help to improve your game in the same way that developing your core will. Postural stability will help develop a consistent swing plane.

+ Can Pilates improve my posture, and how will that improve my game?

Research has shown that around 2/3rds of miss-hit shots are due to poor posture. The swing is a loading and unloading chain reaction, driven by the coiling and uncoiling of the torso; 400 muscles and 70 joints working in unison. Your swing is only as strong technically as its weakest physical link.

What makes Pilates so important with respect to posture is that Pilates will train you to develop and use core strength, rather than holding your position with superficial musculature. Using the deep core muscles of the powerhouse (the abdominals, back, and pelvic floor) to support your posture will allow your shoulders to relax, your neck and head to move freely, and relieve stress on your hips, legs, and feet. We all know good posture when we see it, and we are inspired by how free, graceful and strong it makes a person look.

An improved posture will bring pain relief throughout your body, including back and neck pain, hip pain, leg and foot pain. It will allow you to move efficiently, improving muscle function and increasing your range of motion. It also takes pressure off of compressed organs, improves circulation, and creates a trimmer appearance. It can also add centimetres to your height!

+ How will Pilates reduce my risk of injury and back pain, and can I use it to recover from injury?

Are you one of the 50% of all golfers who suffers from back pain? How many weekends do you have to miss or play within yourself to protect your back? Do not wait for the next injury before you try to improve your core strength and posture. If you have a correct posture, it will improve your swing and also ease the strain on your back, thus reducing the risk of injury. Having a correct posture is not as simply as standing up straight. Muscular imbalances, stiffness and lack of stability due to injury or lifestyle can seriously affect your ability to achieve good posture. Pilates can resolve all these issues.

Have you ever considered how you carry your golf clubs? If you have a carry bag, do you use the double shoulder strap, or do you simply have the bag over one shoulder? The weight of the bag can have a huge effect on your posture and the strain on your spine. If you use a trolley, do you push or pull? You can greatly reduce the strain on your spine by using a trolley you can push at least most of the time. Golfcorestrength will use Pilates based exercises and knowledge to reduce your incidence of injury.

Using Pilates for injury rehabilitation works for many reasons. The great attention to detail and form is a perfect way to gain strength in the weaker or injured muscles and joints. Pilates is gentle on the joints, so there is little worry of over stressing an already stressed body. It also develops the smaller muscle groups that work to support joints and bony structures, and because Pilates builds a bodily awareness to balance, chronically weak and imbalanced muscles become equally strong.

Pilates as rehabilitation is also great preventative medicine. The Pilates principle of core stabilization addresses posture, muscle performance and motor control – the same concepts that form the basis of most orthopaedic rehabilitation and therapy.

+ How will Pilates improve my concentration and focus?

Sportsmen and women often talk about "being in the zone". Most of us will have experienced some holes, or even a round of golf, when our concentration was clear, and our focus was unshakeable.

Golf is a mind and body sport. Pilates is a mind and body exercise system. Concentration is one of the basic principles of Pilates. It means absolute focus on each and every movement. Whilst doing Pilates exercises, you focus the mind on every body movement, as by doing so, the body responds. Over time this builds up mental stamina which will enable you to hold your concentration and not be distracted. The benefits of this for golf are obvious, and will help with shot visualisation and maintain concentration throughout your round, whether things go to plan or not. When you play with body awareness, you gain a new perspective on your game.

Pilates breathing in between holes helps to maintain your concentration and focus. This will control your heart rate and make sure you are in the here-and-now, and not dwelling on past mistakes or thinking about future challenges.

+ Can I use what I learn from golfcorestrength Pilates as a warm-up and warm-down routine?

Warming up is essential for improving your game and also reducing the risk of injury, but how many club golfers regularly commit to even ten minutes needed before they play? Pilates exercises are ideal for this process, and will stretch your "golf" muscles and joints. Warming up with Pilates will enable you to increase your range of motion, find a good tempo before you start your round, and stimulate muscle memory, all of which will help to cut strokes from your score. A body that is prepared for golf is also much less likely to suffer from injury.

Warming down is just as important as warming up, as it will reduce post-game stiffness or soreness. Again we can provide the exercises to do this.

There are also lots of opportunities during a round to stretch your muscles and keep your body in the best condition. Instead of becoming frustrated whilst you are waiting to play your next shot, we will teach you to use the time constructively.

+ Will Pilates help improve my everyday quality of life as well?

Absolutely. All of the benefits that your golf game will get from Pilates, such as more flexibility, a better posture, and core strength, will also benefit you in your everyday life, whether its gardening, playing with your children, or running marathons!

All sounds too good to be true? In my experience, the golfers that I have worked with have had results that are nothing short of amazing. They all wished that they had started sooner. For a minimal investment in time, and the cost of a new driver, you can make a big difference to your golf game and your everyday life.

Whether you are a golf pro or director looking to arrange group sessions at your golf club, or you are an individual looking for one-on-one sessions, for more information please contact me at golfcorestrength Pilates.

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