

## Posture, Pain & Swing Performance

The Canadian Chiropractic Association has quoted Tiger Woods as saying, *“Chiropractic has really helped me. When I was in a growth spurt, my back became very sore and I was weak. My Chiropractor really helped me. Not only did he adjust my spine, he also gave me strengthening exercises to do.”*

The published medical research on golf performance typically addresses two main concerns, improving the swing and conditioning the muscles. Chiropractors are aware of a third and more damaging problem. The golfer's posture can break down. This posture breakdown can lead to loss of timing and balance, reduced flexibility, strained muscles, reduced game performance and pain. Researchers have also shown there is a relationship between back pain and loss of flexibility in golfers. The University of Calgary Sports Medicine Centre compared spine motion in elite golfers with and without low back pain. They found that golfers experiencing low back pain tended to bend (flex) their backs more when addressing the ball and used significantly greater left side bending on the back swing. This was the first investigation that revealed the distinct differences in swing mechanics between golfers with and without low back pain. Other researchers have investigated the role of hip and low back range-of-motion deficits in professional golfers experiencing low back pain. They found that golfers with low back pain had reduced flexibility and reduced lead hip rotation.

Chiropractic technology has advanced to the level where we now understand that human posture is greatly influenced by the position of the head on the top bone in the neck, called Atlas. Atlas misalignment can be produced when its supporting ligaments are damaged, for example, if a golfer is involved in a motor vehicle collision or fall. Use of posture measuring equipment confirms Atlas misalignment and reveals that posture has broken down. X-rays designed by NUCCA (National Upper Cervical Chiropractic Association) are used to confirm the Atlas injury and they provide guidance for the treatment of the Atlas and realignment of the spine. The clinical experience of chiropractors who focus on care of the upper neck have revealed that by gently aligning the support of the head (Atlas bone), golfers can experience reduced back pain and improved flexibility.

Atlas specific chiropractic care benefits both recreational and competitive golfers. Chris, a local competitive golfer shares his experience. *“The spine is the axis of the golf swing, you must swing around that axis. If you're playing with back pain you probably have limited flexibility and you have designed your swing around this. Chances are you are inconsistent with your game, frustrated and the game is not much fun. For 12 years I played the game with chronic low back pain and designed my game around the pain and limited flexibility. After my NUCCA treatments and*

*following the exercise routine, I was absolutely astonished by the difference it made in my flexibility and pain. All of a sudden my back swing got longer and I was able to take a full follow-through, pain free. This was a revelation in my eyes and the game was on. Just one problem, after 12 years I had to learn to swing the club all over again and learn to control the ball, all because the pain was gone and I was so much more flexible. That's a problem I can live with now that I can swing around the axis properly."*

The message becomes clear for all golfers. To ensure that your weight is balanced, your back is flexible and your golf swing is developed to its maximum potential, your posture must be aligned. So, the next time you address the ball and have difficulty lining up your shoulders with your hips and feet, you may actually have an Atlas misalignment.

Dr. Kevin Creswell DC BSc  
Providence Chiropractic Clinic  
Phone: 780-450-1041  
E-mail: [drcreswell@hotmail.com](mailto:drcreswell@hotmail.com)

Chris East