

Golf After Total Knee Replacement



Total knee replacement can be tough on a golfer. A 2008 report from the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons found that swinging a golf club creates even more stress on the knee than jogging. But with a good rehabilitation program like the month-by-month regimen outlined below, you can be back on the course by the summer.

January to March: Postsurgery, the emphasis will be on general strengthening, making your

operative side as functional as your nonoperative side.

April: Begin chipping and putting. Your knee must handle a variety of rotational forces when playing golf; incorporating cable machines and balance boards into therapy can help strengthen the knee accordingly.

May: Start hitting short irons. Begin with a small bucket and see how you feel. If you experience any pain or stiffness, take a break. Trade the golf cleats (which actually increase the rotational stress on the knee) for a tennis-type sole shoe.

June: By now, you will be on your way to playing all the golf clubs.

However, take the following precautions:

- **At first, use a golf cart.** Walking a full 18 holes can wear *YOU* out before you can enjoy swinging a club. Use the cart for the first few rounds. Then walk 9 holes and use the cart on the back 9. Progress slowly!
- **Don't carry your clubs.** When you do start walking the course again, use a caddy or roller to avoid putting added stress on the knee.
- **Take a rain check.** Avoid playing in wet weather. You are still getting your balance back, and the last thing you need is to slip on a wet course.
- **Adjust your swing.** If you are right handed and the left knee was operated on, try turning the left foot more open toward your target to minimize rotation at the knee (reverse this for lefties with a right knee replacement). This may lead to a push/slice; talk to a golf teaching professional for help.

Above all, be patient. If you follow our instructions and commit to rehabilitation, you will be back working on that handicap in no time.