

# & Joint News

## Bone

TRI RIVERS SURGICAL ASSOCIATES

FALL 2002

## Below Par

*Don't let a golf injury affect your handicap*

If it's been a while since your last golf outing, chances are your swing is as rusty as the Tin Man in the Wizard of Oz. To avoid injury, it's important to work out any kinks before teeing off.

"The golf swing is a chain of motion that involves the entire body from the shoulders to your toes," said Thomas S. Muzzonigro, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon with Tri Rivers Surgical. As you swing a club, the

transfer of force puts significant demands on the joints in the body and may cause injury if you're not physically conditioned."

The most common golf injuries occur in the back, shoulders, elbows and wrists. Injuries to the legs and feet are less common, but if you've had lower extremity injuries in the past, they could flare up.

tissues to heal, pain and inflammation can occur."

Resting the affected arm, applying ice and taking an over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medication, like aspirin, may help reduce swelling. Physical therapy or an at-home exercise program may also strengthen the arm and help prevent further injury. Surgery is only required in rare cases where conservative measures do not work or damage to the soft tissues is so severe they will not heal on their own.

recommend a treatment plan designed to eliminate or reduce symptoms and improve mobility," said Trenton M. Gause, M.D., an orthopedic back specialist with Tri Rivers.

Most causes of golfer's back can be treated with conservative measures, including rest and anti-inflammatory medications, but prevention is the best medicine, Dr. Gause said.

"To help prevent injury, develop proper swing mechanics, improve your overall fitness level and warm up prior to playing," he said.

According to Dr. Muzzonigro, there are several conditions that are common among golfers.

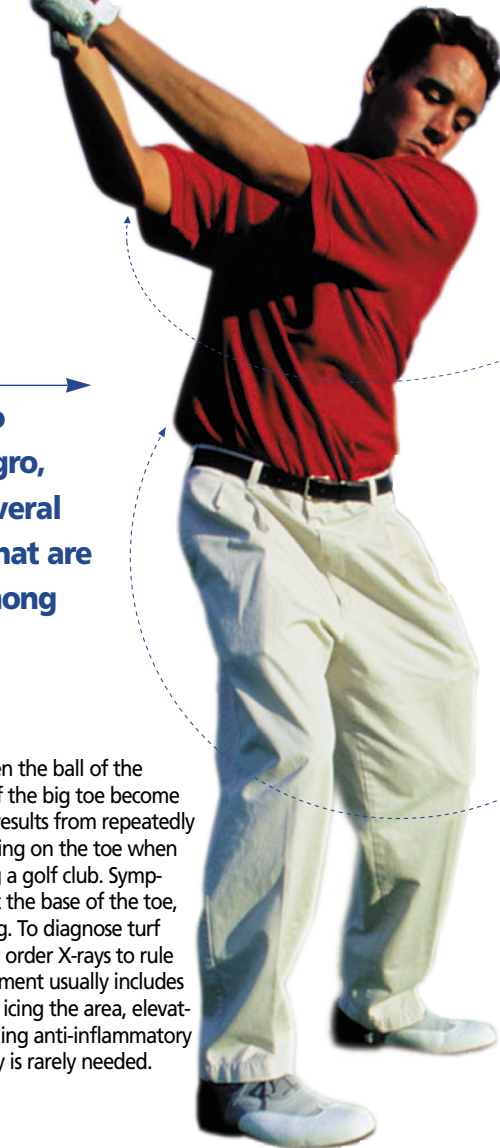
**Turf toe** occurs when the ball of the foot and the base of the big toe become inflamed. It usually results from repeatedly pushing off or pivoting on the toe when running or swinging a golf club. Symptoms include pain at the base of the toe, stiffness and swelling. To diagnose turf toe, a physician may order X-rays to rule out a fracture. Treatment usually includes resting the sore toe, icing the area, elevating the foot and taking anti-inflammatory medications. Surgery is rarely needed.

**Golfer's elbow**, also known as medial epicondylitis, affects the knobby bump on the inside of the elbow. This injury typically results from repetitive arm movement. Overusing the muscles in the arm may lead to tiny tears in the tendons that attach the muscles in your forearm.

"Golfer's elbow can be caused by long sessions practicing your golf swing, or during other activities including painting, raking, rowing and hammering," Dr. Muzzonigro said. "If you don't allow the soft

**Golfer's back** relates to an injury of the lumbar spine that is prominent in the golfing population. This injury however, may be the result of a number of other maladies, including an underlying disk problem or arthritis in the facet joints of the back. Improper body mechanics or overuse can lead to inflammation and pain.

"In order to treat golfer's back, your physician will first conduct a thorough physical examination to determine the underlying cause of pain. Once the cause has been determined, your physician will





# Growing pains

## Stretch your limbs; avoid sprouting an injury

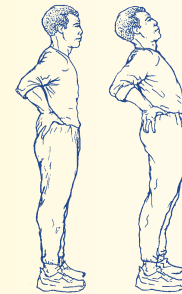
You can reduce your risk of aches and pains by performing the following exercises before and after gardening.

### Quadricep Stretch



Stand upright and hold onto a sturdy table or chair. Grasp the ankle with your hand and gently pull the heel toward your buttocks. Hold the stretch for 10 seconds. Repeat and switch legs.

### Backward Bend



Stand with your feet shoulder length apart and knees slightly bent. Place your hands in the small of your back as shown; bend gently and slowly backward at the waist, as far as possible. Return to the upright position. Repeat five times.

### Hand Stretch



Hold one hand straight out with the palm facing up. Use the opposite hand to gently push back your fingers and wrist. Hold for five seconds. Repeat five times on each hand.

### Elbow Twisting Exercise



With outstretched arms, practice wringing out a dry terry cloth with both hands. Repeat 10 times.

**G**ardening is a relaxing pastime that seems suitable for everyone. In reality, many gardeners often harvest injuries along with their crops because they forget how physically demanding working in a garden can be.

"The back, legs, shoulders, elbows and wrists are all major muscle groups affected when using your green thumb," said William D. Abraham, M.D., orthopedic surgeon with Tri Rivers Surgical Associates.

"Even a small plot requires digging, raking, bending, reaching, lifting and carrying — activities that use muscles that may have hibernated over the winter. These repetitive motions can lead to injuries, like sprains or strains, or aggravate existing conditions, such as arthritis, bursitis and tendonitis. Fortunately, most gardening injuries can be avoided," Dr. Abraham said.

Don't work until you wilt. Just as your beans won't sprout overnight, don't push yourself to complete all of your gardening tasks in one afternoon. Spread the work out over a couple of days. Start off slowly and take frequent breaks.

Plant yourself properly. Use correct form and posture while gardening. Avoid bending your back or twisting at the waist. Bend at the knees when lifting objects, pulling weeds or planting. Stretch your limbs frequently to prevent muscle strain.

If a day in the garden turns into an evening of aches and pains, rest, use icepacks on your sore muscles, and take an over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medication to reduce pain and swelling. If symptoms persist, contact your physician.



# Wet Your Whistle

Did you know that your bones contain 22 percent water? And muscles contain 73 percent?

Next to oxygen, water is the most important nutrient needed to keep the body functioning properly. It helps the body regulate its temperature, transport nutrients, assist with digestive and other body functions, and moisten the skin.

"The body's need for water increases during physical activity," said D. Kelly Agnew, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon with Tri Rivers Surgical. It is important to maintain proper hydration before, during and after activity."

To stay hydrated, begin drinking water an hour or two before you know you'll be gardening, competing or exercising. Continue to drink water during activity to replace fluid lost through perspiration.

"Thirst, dry mouth and dry throat signal that your body is already short on fluid," Dr. Agnew said. "If you experience these or other symptoms of dehydration, take a break from your activity to rehydrate."

Other symptoms include lightheadedness, dizziness, muscle cramps, dry skin, nausea, headache or fatigue.



# Orthopedics *True or False?*

Are you double jointed? What's so funny about your funny "bone"?

Test your knowledge of orthopedic facts versus fiction. Read what Lewis F. Nettrour, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon with Tri Rivers Surgical, has to say about these orthopedic topics:

- **Bumping your funny bone is an unnerving experience.**

True, but not for the reason you may think. The funny "bone" is actually the ulnar nerve, which runs along the inside side of your elbow. Striking the nerve can cause pain or a temporary tingling sensation. For that reason, the only thing humorous about the funny bone is its name.

- **A fracture is less serious than a broken bone.**

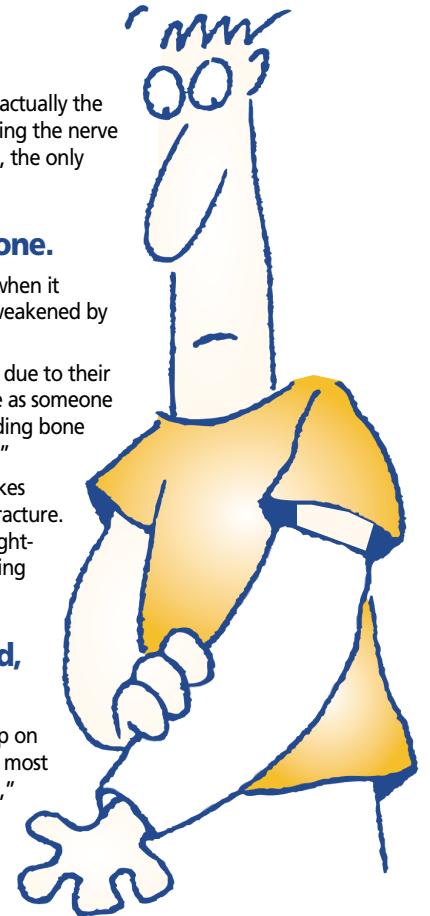
False. The terms "fracture" and "broken" mean the same thing when it comes to your bones. The good news is all bones — even those weakened by osteoporosis — will repair themselves after a fracture.

"While individuals with osteoporosis are more prone to fractures due to their weakened bone density, they're still able to heal at the same rate as someone with normal bone tissue," Dr. Nettrour said. "That's because building bone density and healing involve two separate physiological processes."

Regardless of age or the underlying condition of your bone, it takes approximately one year for bone to regain full strength after a fracture. You can strengthen your bone at any age by participating in weight-bearing activities, which increase the development of bone-building cells called osteoblasts.

- **If you can put your foot behind your head, you're probably double-jointed.**

Probably false. Gymnasts and contortionists seem to have a leg up on the rest of us when it comes to stretching like a rubber band. "In most people, there is no structural difference in the shape of the joints," Dr. Nettrour said. "It's more likely that very flexible people either work hard to stay that way and/or have more collagen tissue, making their tissues more elastic than others."



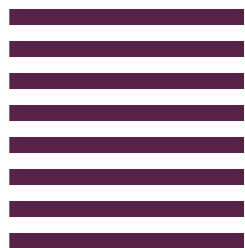
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