

Case Study

Want to live 5 years longer?
Play golf.

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Introduction

Are we aware of the health benefits of golf as we could be? Do we use the health benefits of golf as a marketing tool? Why is it always about the score and not the distance walked, the environment we walked in and the calories burned. We are

missing a great opportunity here to promote the game in a different way. It's no longer a "Good walk spoiled" it's a "Great walk".

5 Years Longer

A recent study out of Sweden identified that golfers live on average 5 years longer than non-golfers, regardless of gender, age and socioeconomic status. The study, which was published in Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports, is based on data from 300,000 Swedish golfers and shows that golf has beneficial health effects. The death rate amongst golfers is 40 per cent lower than the rest of the population, which equates to an increased life expectancy of five years.

Professor Anders Ahlborn, who has led the study is not surprised at the result, as he believes that there are several aspects of the game that are proved to be good for the health.

"A round of golf means being outside for four or five hours, walking at a fast pace for six to seven kilometres, something which is known to be good for the health," he says. "People play golf into old age, and there are also positive social and psychological aspects to the game that can be of help" Other research throughout the world has also backed up the health benefits of golf, Dr Andrew Murray a Scottish sports medicine doctor is part of a group of researchers involved in a 5 year project looking at the benefits of health in sport.

He comments "Golf has a unique contribution in Scotland and further afield, it is a sport that can be played from the age of 4 – 104, and played by all ages and both genders." He refers to the Swedish study "People think it is partly to do with physical activity, but there is also the getting out in the fresh air and the social connections and perhaps the benefits you get from that"

A part of the study was also based around the health benefits of spectators in sport "With most sports, the majority of people watching are sitting stationary in a seat usually with food and drink. But with golf people tend to wander the 4 miles of the course following their favourite players and doing useful physical activity" So a trip to the ISPS Handa NZ Golf Open or the McKayson New Zealand's Womens Open is a must for your fitness regime. It's not just for the great golf to be enjoyed but the calories burned.

In the United Kingdom the parliamentarians are right behind golf as an option to reduce some of that countries cost of 7.4 bn pounds per year spent on those health associated conditions based on inactivity. They understand that in a 9 hole round golfers will walk 2-3 miles and burn over 450 calories all within a couple of hours. It is a sociable sport that can reduce stress levels and improve their self-esteem.

One Golf site offered up the following top 10 health benefits of golf:

- **Exposure to the outdoors**
Exposure to green areas relaxes the body, reduces stress and can aid in alleviating anxiety. Vitamin D from the sun. (Remember slip,slop,slap)
- **Foster relationships**
a great way to meet new friends and keep in touch with existing friends and family. A great number of business deals are closed on the golf course.
- **Strengthens the bladder**
Say no more.
- **Burns Calories**
With all the walking, carrying and swinging involved golfers can burn up to 1000 calories in a single 18 hole game.
- **Keeps your heart rate up**
Golf will keep your heart rate up, keeping it pumping and increasing your blood flow. Potentially lowering your risks for heart disease and decrease levels of bad cholesterol.
- **Good for your brain**
The mental alacrity involved in keeping score, improving strategy and decision making and fostering hand eye co-ordination will keep the brain active in logical functions.
- **Improves vision**
Watching where your ball went and searching for it when it goes astray allows the evaluation the keenness of your vision.
- **Low risk injury sport**
Golf is a low risk injury sport but provides enough physical activity to keep the muscles engaged.
- **Better sleep**
Since you are getting quite a bit of exercise it is found to give you a better sleep. (Unless you replay your round in your head!!)
- **Reduces Stress**
Being in an outdoor area where you can interact with others who share your interests is a great way to forget any troubles.

It is interesting to look at the above list and a large majority of your perception of the benefits will be determined upon how your golf went on the day, how many times has the game increased blood pressure, stress and caused fractured relationships on the golf course? Is it a good walk spoiled?

Conclusion

The health benefits of golf are many, but do we use these to our advantage. Do we highlight the natural environment that we play our game in, the views to be had from various vantage points around the course and do we understand the future of technology in exercise? For example the advent of fitness measuring devices becoming more prevalent and the need to hit our daily steps targets. A recent 9 hole game with a family member highlighted this opportunity, as we walked

off he said "My golf wasn't great but I had 6000 steps so I have hit my target". In the future it may be about the steps taken, the calories burned and the score potentially irrelevant?

Want help with promoting the health benefits of golf at your club then get in touch with your NZ Golf Community Golf team at 09 485 3230.