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Don't Let Allergies Steer You Off Course

By Karen Palacios-Jansen

If you have allergies and you play golf, you can expect to suffer out on the golf course. The summer months can be particularly miserable because there are more elements such as grasses and trees that are in full bloom.

Many professional golfers suffer from allergies including Tiger Woods and LPGA tour player Jill McGill. Woods reportedly manages his sinus allergies by minimizing his exposure to allergens, but does not like to take allergy medicine while he plays because it gives him dry-mouth. The infamous Tiger Woods spit caught on tape during the Dubai Desert Classic this year was reportedly a result of allergies Woods suffered that day.

"Non-prescription Claritin D 24 (kept behind the pharmacy counter) brings relief to many. Although "non-drowsy," it will dry out your sinuses, so drinking extra fluids is especially important when using anti-histamine of any sort," says Robin Barrie Kaiden, MS, RD, CDN, sport nutrition and weight loss expert.

On the other hand, McGill chooses to use medication during her round and seeks the help of doctors to prescribe proper medication to relieve her symptoms.

Outdoor allergies tend to occur in the spring, summer and fall, when plant pollen is more prevalent. People are sensitive to different allergens, and those with seasonal allergies may experience symptoms of differing severity that peak at different times of the year. Outdoor allergies also tend to vary regionally; you may have very severe allergies in one place and almost no symptoms in another.

If you suffer from allergies, it's imperative you take precautions to help you through your round. Here are a few suggestions to help minimize the sneezing and watery eyes, so you can concentrate on your game.

- Check the pollen count before you venture out on the golf course. You can find them at the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology website. If the count is high, you may have to increase the dosage of your medication, postpone or skip the round all together.

The 5 Most Common Outdoor Allergies

- 1** Pollen-Pollen is tiny particles released from trees, weeds, and grasses; each spring, summer and fall.
- 2** Mold- In addition to pollens from trees, grasses, and weeds, molds cause many seasonal allergies. The symptoms in people prevail from spring to late fall.
- 3** Poisonous Plants-These plants are sometimes loosely referred to as "poison ivy," but are actually three distinct species: poison ivy, poison oak and poison sumac.
- 4** Insects-Insects including mosquitoes, bees, wasps, hornets, yellow-jackets and fire ants have a toxic substance called venom, that can trigger a powerful immune response in humans.
- 5** Air Pollution-Technology dependent on petrochemicals, pesticides and herbicides has polluted our air, food and water.

Source: Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America website.





If you suffer from allergies, it's imperative you take precautions to help you through your round.

- Start your round early in the morning or late in the afternoon. The peak pollen hours are between 10:00 am and 4:00 pm. Playing during non-peak hours could help relieve some symptoms.
- Avoid windy days. The wind blows the pollen more severely, so you end up suffering more.
- Avoid allergens inside. Pollen transfers to

clothes and equipment. Shower and change your clothes after the round. Keep your equipment and golf shoes outside, away from your living and sleeping area.

- Visit your physician. He or she can determine what you are allergic to and prescribe the proper medication to alleviate your symptoms. **GFM**

DETERMINE THE SOURCE OF YOUR ALLERGY

According to Barrie, a registered, licensed dietitian and certified personal trainer, not all allergies are environmental. "Golfers may suffer from allergy symptoms during a round, but these may actually be food allergies instead or in addition to their environmental allergies. Visiting your doctor for blood or skin allergy and food sensitivity testing may prove helpful. However, these tests are not infallible. The best way to determine true allergies/sensitivities is with an elimination or detoxification diet. Such regimes eliminate all potentially allergenic/sensitive items, and then restores them back into the diet individually. Symptoms can range from headaches due to sensitivity, to hives or gastrointestinal discomfort with true allergies or intolerances, and that the eight most common food allergens cause 90 percent of all food allergy reactions," says Barrie. Barrie suggests that golfers try an elimination/detoxification diet to rid the body of allergens, but to have it conducted under the supervision of a registered dietitian or nutritionist to ensure that nutritional needs are met.

The 8 Most Common Food Allergens

1. Fish (bass, cod, flounder)
2. Shellfish (shrimp, crab, lobster)
3. Wheat
4. Milk (dairy)
5. Eggs
6. Soy
7. Peanuts
8. Tree nuts (almonds, cashews, walnuts)

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Food for Golf: Food for Thought

By Robin Barrie Kaiden

The worlds of golf and fitness have recognized that a fit and healthy person who exercises regularly makes a better golfer. Professional golfers have begun to travel with fitness trailers and personal trainers. The Titleist Performance Institute (TPI) has created programs to coach personal trainers in developing golf-specific assessments and exercise programs. All levels of golfers are finding that their golf game improves along with their workouts. Less attention, however, is given to the significance of Sports Nutrition for golf. Proper food intake improves overall health, boosts sports performance, enhances muscle recovery, and can help prevent injuries. Leaner and stronger performing bodies are not achieved via exercise alone. Weight loss and increased muscle mass are attained 80% through diet, and only 20% from exercise! The right foods help improve body composition (increased lean tissue with decreased fat mass), allowing for more muscle mass, which means increased strength and power. These facts prove true for all athletes including golfers.

Golf is an endurance sport. Although much lower in intensity than a marathon or triathlon, golf rounds last around four hours, can cover 8,500 yards (a bit over five miles) of walking for 18 holes, and may span eight or more hours and multiple days during tournament play. The number of calories burned depends on a variety of factors including age, weight, gender and whether the golfer walks and carries clubs, or rides in a cart. To give a general estimate, a 150-pound golfer burns about 300-375 calories per hour while walking the course and carrying clubs, while the cart-rider burns around



half this amount. This aerobic (oxygen required for energy production) portion of the sport uses mainly carbohydrates and fat for fuel. The golf swing itself is an anaerobic (oxygen not needed to produce energy), explosive power movement that primarily consumes carbohydrates—specifically muscle glycogen—as its major fuel source. Protein is one of the main components of the body, found in muscles, skin, bone and other tissues. It helps the body recover from micro-trauma created in muscle during workouts, and can decrease post-workout soreness. Protein also helps you feel more satiated and full since it takes longer to digest than carbohydrates, thus aiding in weight management. The body must be energized appropriately for optimal function in order for performance enhancement and physical skill maintenance to take place throughout the entire event.

In addition, golf is a sport of skill that requires stability, balance, accuracy and duration of concentration. Not only do muscles need food energy to work their best, the brain itself requires food for

thought as well. The right nutrients in the correct portions produce hormone balance and allow the mind to remain focused on the game. In a general sense, golfers who consistently consume a healthy, balanced diet will experience enhanced performance. Those who do not may decrease their ability to concentrate. Glucose, the building block of all carbohydrates, is the only fuel (normally) used by the brain to function. A diet lacking in glucose, or low glucose levels resulting from skipped meals or very low carbohydrate diets, decreases the brain's ability to think and concentrate. Many research studies have demonstrated that students who eat versus skip breakfast have enhanced cognitive skills and school performance. Your brain requires that same level of cognition on the course that is required in the classroom. Therefore, you must not skip meals! If you, for example, finish dinner at 8 p.m. the night before your round, and then skip breakfast for an 8 a.m. tee time, you are already starting on 12 hours of empty without fuel for the course. There is no way you will feel good, have the ability to concentrate, or perform your best by the back nine. Feelings of hunger, including pangs and a growling stomach, can be distracting.

On the other hand, eating too much can also have a negative effect on your game. Consuming a large, heavy meal high in fat before or during the round can make you feel tired or lethargic. This is because blood is diverted away from your brain and working muscles and directed toward the stomach and gastrointestinal tract for digestion. In this case, less fuel (carried by the blood) is available for swinging and thinking. Research studies have revealed that

high-calorie, high-fat meals impair cognition in students and lab rats. The same is true on the golf course.

Balance is an important concept for optimal meals and snacks as well. We already know that glucose (carbohydrate) is imperative for muscle and brain cells; however, carbohydrates consumed alone are not ideal. For example, if you eat just fruit or crackers alone, your blood sugar will spike, insulin is released into the blood stream to take this glucose into the body, and you will feel a brief surge of energy. Then, as your blood sugar returns to a lower level as the glucose enters the cells, you could eventually experience a sugar “crash,” feeling just as tired— if not more so— than before your snack. This can be prevented by adding a moderate amount of protein or a small amount of fat to your meal or snack.

Maintaining hydration on the course is essential to optimal performance. Although you are not a football player running yards in a helmet and padding, you may be walking the course and carrying your clubs on a humid 90-degree day and losing plenty of water and electrolytes while sweating. A loss of just 2-3% of your body weight in sweat causes dehydration and decreased performance. Prevent this by drinking two cups of water before the round, one cup every two holes, and using a sport drink with electrolytes on extremely sweaty days. If weighing yourself before and after a round still reveals weight lost, rehydrate by drinking 16-24 ounces of water for every pound lost after the round. **GFM**



TAKE IT TO THE COURSE

Before Your Round:

Goals:

- Enough fluid to prevent dehydration
- Low fat, low fiber for ease of digestion and decreased stomach discomfort
- Elevated carbohydrates to maintain optimum blood sugar levels
- Moderate protein to maintain satiety

Examples:

- Oatmeal topped with nuts, raisins, and skim milk
- Vegetable egg white omelet with two slices of wheat toast and a pear
- Yogurt parfait layered with honey, granola and berries
- Egg whites, pepper turkey, lettuce, tomato and avocado on a whole wheat wrap, with an apple

During Your Round:

Goals:

- Replace fluid losses
- Sufficient carbohydrates to maintain optimal blood sugar levels

Examples:

- About one cup (eight ounces) of water every two holes
- Sports drinks containing carbohydrates and electrolytes for extremely hot/humid days
- Natural peanut butter and jelly on whole grain bread
- Handful of nuts and dried fruit or an apple (or other fruit)

Energy / Nutrition Bars:

I recommend all natural bars not loaded with saturated fats (partially hydrogenated and palm kernel oils) and added sugars (cane sugar, fructose, corn syrup, rice syrup, evaporated cane juice, dextrose, maltose, molasses, etc.).

After Your Round:

Goals:

- Adequate intake for quick recovery
- Replace fluids and electrolytes
- Sufficient carbohydrates to replace muscle glycogen
- Protein for building and repair of muscles

Examples:

- 16-24 ounces of water for every pound lost
- Grilled chicken with steamed broccoli and brown rice
- Turkey burger on whole wheat roll with lettuce and tomato, green beans and baked sweet potato