

# PRESCRIPTION FOR A COMPLETE SHOULDER TURN

By Carolyn McCool with John Bolesta

The shoulder turn in golf is a very important aspect of the golf swing. If a senior player can't turn, they are limited in what they can make the club do. The senior player knows his or her body does not perform as it did in past days. The flexibility and strength they once had can be much less than what it used to be. To make matters worse, conventional wisdom led some to the gym where traditional weight lifting exercises have worked against the body and actually

created more tightness and restriction in the shoulders and upper body area.

"It isn't that the senior player can't comprehend an instructional tip, but more so, it is the body that can't do it," cites John Bolesta, a Titleist Performance Institute Certified Fitness Trainer, working out of Saucon Valley CC, Lehigh CC, and Infini-Tee Golf Center in New Jersey.

Most shoulder limitations in senior players have to do with poor posture, which

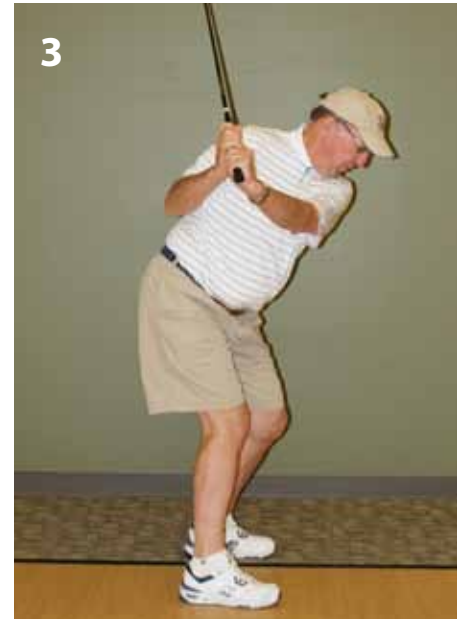
develops over time. "Proper posture in golf cannot be over emphasized because the shoulder turn and upper body motion depend on getting this right from the start," says Bolesta. "If a senior golfer has better posture, they will have the opportunity to swing better. When you swing better, your confidence and enjoyment of the game go way up. Most people do not know they are in a poor postural position," he continues.

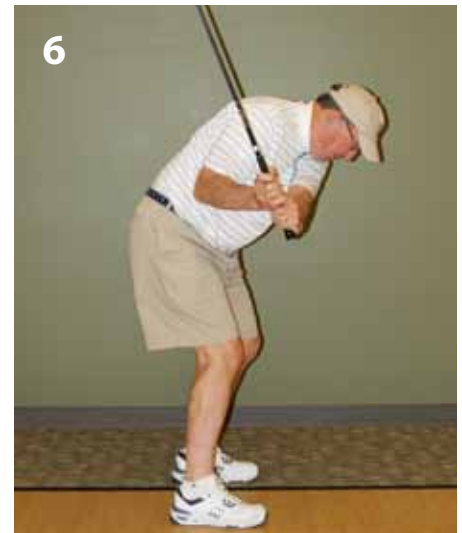
Check yourself in the mirror to determine what kind of posture you have so that you will be able to correct it and complete your shoulder turn in your golf swing. Ideally you want to achieve neutral posture as seen here. Here is a quick and easy way to check your posture: **Step One** – Stand sideways in front of a long mirror, **Step Two** – Place yourself in your golf set-up holding a six iron, **Step Three** – Glance sideways to check your posture

## What to look for:

**Two possibilities** – A Neutral, straight posture or a "C" (leaning forward) posture

If you have a neutral or straight posture (this is the posture of the professional golfer). You have no curves (image 2) at the bottom or top of your spine, but a straight spine. This means you have the opportunity to make a good backswing.





If you have a “C”-posture (this is the common posture for seniors, especially men). You have a forward curve in the upper/middle of the back, which extends down your lower back, forming a “C” (image 5). This means that your chest and lat muscles (which extend from your shoulders to your lower back) are tight. You will have a difficult time separating your upper body from your lower body while turning into your back swing. You won’t be able to coil properly. Tight shoulders, represented in the “C” posture, mean restricted swings. Compare image 6 to image 3, on the previous page, and notice the much fuller back swing.

The following exercise will increase flexibility in your shoulders, lats, and chest area. With the proper posture, you will now be able to create a better turn which equals a more efficient and powerful swing. Seniors should do this exercise thoughtfully and slowly, watching how they breathe at the point of hold. This exercise, along with a continual thought of proper posture, is best repeated two or three times a day or may be done before you take the tee. It’s also good to do on a cold day to get those muscles warmed up to prevent injury.

**Upper Body Shoulder Flexibility Exercise –  
5-10 reps, 10-15 seconds hold**

**STEP ONE** – Place your buttocks against a wall, with you feet shoulder width apart and one foot from the wall. **STEP TWO** – Without lifting your buttocks off the wall, try to place your entire back against the wall. **STEP THREE** – Once you place your back against the wall, lift your chest forward and up, pulling in your stomach to protect your lower back. Keep shoulder blades down. Now you are ready to attempt to reach over your head. **STEP FOUR** – Place your hands by your side against the wall with palms facing forward. Keeping your hands against the wall, try to slide your hands and arms up along the wall as far as they can go. Breathe as you hold. The goal is to reach above your head with proper posture, without hiking your shoulders, and without tension along any of the muscles from your lower back to your arms. Repeat the exercise. Over time, you will improve your ability to keep your entire back against the wall as you reach over your head and attempt to touch the wall. If you are having a lot of difficulty, use one arm at a time. Two additional ways to modify this exercise are to sit in a chair or stool (turned around) against the wall, or you may lie on your back on the floor.



*John Bolesta, a Titleist Performance Institute Certified Golf Fitness Trainer works out of Saucon Valley CC, host site of the 2009 US Womens Open, Lehigh CC, and Infini-Tee Golf Center in New Jersey.*