

FIRST TEE GREATER TRENTON – SPECIAL EDITION: 2021 SPRING HEALTH & WELLNESS NEWSLETTER



Dear Friends of First Tee Greater Trenton,

An integral component of the First Tee Greater Trenton program is to promote healthy, active lifestyles for young people. On a national basis First Tee has created a collaborative partnership with the ANNIKA Foundation and Florida Hospital for Children to create the First Tee Nine Healthy Habits. Locally, our chapter is very fortunate to have a retired physician on our board, **Dr. Cindy Sussman**. Dr. Sussman has made the commitment to create and publish educational and resourceful information for our participants. Additionally, through her efforts she has teamed up with other health care partners to share their professional knowledge with our youth.

Today is our first Health & Wellness Newsletter published by Dr. Cindy Sussman. Please enjoy our Spring Edition from the First Tee Greater Trenton and we will be publishing Health & Wellness information throughout the year.

Key Fact: Playing the game of golf can improve your quality of life as there are many physical, emotional and social benefits



Health & Wellness for the First Tee Golfer

Winter is upon us and April can't get here soon enough! You may be wondering what you can do to get a head start on your best golf season ever. Sure, shoveling snow can help your upper body strength, but let's try to break it down a bit further than that.

Total fitness can be divided into 4 basic categories: Mind, breath, muscle strength, and flexibility. You need all 4 to be in peak condition to play your best golf and you can work on all 4 even with 6 inches of snow on the ground. Here's how it works.

MIND

This has been a tough year. We have never before faced the challenges of a pandemic. You probably don't see your friends very often, your family members may have become ill, people are working from home, or may have lost jobs, and you are probably attending school in limited classrooms or on Zoom. Suddenly there is more pressure on everyone, and very little way to blow off steam. School is a real challenge, and students who are thinking of college are worried about how to make themselves stand out when they can't even leave the house.

What can you do about it? First, acknowledge the fact there are things that are out of your control, but there are still some things you can manage.

Most importantly, STAY SAFE! That means wear a mask, even when you think you are with people who are being careful. Asymptomatic carriers are real and are often among your friends and family. Wash your hands frequently and for as long as it takes to sing Happy Birthday. Or use hand sanitizer. Maintain social distancing, even if you are outside, and even if you are wearing a mask. Don't try to rationalize it; just do it.

While you are staying safe, get outside, exercise, and keep up contact with friends by phone, text, Zoom or safely spaced contact outside. Social connections are important for the health of your mind!

Another great way you can help your mind is through meditation. There are lots of apps that can walk you through it and even some that are geared specifically to golf. Learning to focus your mind will certainly help bring down your score! Here is an easy one that will get you started: [Anna Kaminski Mountain Meditation For Kids, Teens and Adults](#)

Remember, a pandemic can really be tough on your mind! If you are feeling really anxious or depressed, call someone and get help immediately. There are lots of resources on the CDC COVID website for kids and teens at [CDC Support For Teens and Young Adults](#)

BREATH

Along with food and water, breath is one of the key ingredients to life. Getting oxygen (energy) to your muscles and nerves will enhance every aspect of your basic health, and controlled breathing can calm your mind. Practicing breath work can greatly improve your golf game, and winter is a good time to get started! You know how you sometimes feel when you go up to the first tee and everyone is watching you? That's your body turning on its flight or fight mechanism. Your brain is telling your body that it is anxious and you may have to flee. So it increases the release of stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. These hormones are very powerful and can make you flub your first shot, or, if you harness them correctly, let you hit the longest drive of your life! The good news is, you have the power to keep those hormones in check, simply by controlling your breath! Taking several deep slow breaths can immediately turn off the over production of stress hormones and allow you to use their energy usefully, without letting them get the better of you.

A great technique to do this is called 4 square breathing. Simply put, you take a deep breath to the count of four (1,2,3,4 said sloooowly), hold it for 4 breaths, let it out slowly to the count of four, and hold it again for a count of 4. Try it! Practice this so you are used to doing it, and next time you are feeling jittery or need to focus a bit better on the task at hand, do it. So instead of jumping to be the first one off the tee, let someone else go first, while you are quietly doing your 4 square breathing! It works for putting too!

MUSCLE STRENGTH

It seems pretty intuitive that a stronger person might be able to hit a golf ball further than one not as strong, but that isn't always the case. It's club head speed that truly determines how far your ball will go, and muscle strength is only one part of that. However, there is one group of muscles that can really improve your game if you make them stronger, and that's your core. Your back and abdominal muscles do more for you during a golf swing than your arms. So, when you work out, don't forget to work your core! Pilates, Thai chi and yoga are great ways to do this and also help develop your balance, another key aspect of a good golf swing. There are tons of videos on YouTube designed to improve core strength.

Don't forget that rest is an important part of developing muscle strength. If you are working a set of muscles, be sure to pause between reps to allow the muscles to recuperate. Total body rest is also critical. 8-9 hours of sleep per night is essential. If you are anxious, sleep can be more difficult. Make sure your room is cool, dark and quiet. Go to bed at the same time every night, and especially now, when you are in front of a screen almost all day, make sure to turn off your electronics at least 2 hours before sleep.

We will focus more on muscle strength in a future newsletter.

FLEXIBILITY

Most First Tee participants won't have too much trouble in the area of flexibility as younger muscles and tendons tend to be more flexible. Still, it's a good idea to make sure you are nice and loose before you start playing golf. Swing the club in wide circles so your shoulders and back can move fully around you, enabling the best contact possible with the ball. Stretch out your shoulders, legs and arms too, especially after working out.

Along with flexibility is posture. You need to have good posture in order to have a golf swing at its max. Think about your posture even when you are just walking around the house. Sitting in front of a computer all day can really mess with your posture. ***Correct it now- you are really going to need it in April!***

Winter won't be here forever, so use this time to get ready for your best golf season ever!

In our next newsletter, we will talk about the First Tee 9 Healthy Habits. Stay tuned, stay healthy, and stay safe!

Helpful Resources

[TIPS FOR MAINTAINING A HEALTHY BODY FOR GOLF](#)

[THE GOLF FITNESS CHALLENGE](#)

REGISTRATION SITE FOR OUR 2021 SPRING PROGRAMS: [Registration Site](#)

If you have any questions, please contact our Program Director, Rob Connelley robertc.firstteegreatertrenton@gmail.com or Executive Director, Ed Benson edb.thefirstteegreatertrenton@gmail.com