

# APPEALING HEALING

by Kate Farr and Rachel Read

Whilst hours spent on the green can do a world of good for your handicap, it can also come with some less positive effects... like golfer's elbow, back and shoulder pain, and wrist tendonitis, to name just a few of the most common golfing injuries. Thankfully, these aches and pains can usually be swiftly alleviated with some professional help – so we've rounded up five of the best treatments available in Hong Kong to get you back to peak fitness.

## SPORTS MASSAGE

When deciding how to treat golf-related injuries, sports massage is probably the most obvious place to start. The Spa at Four Seasons Hong Kong's Sports Recovery Massage promises to release deep-seated tension in the body caused from playing sports, using a personalised combination of massage techniques to ease stiff muscles, stimulate circulation and restore flexibility.

"Only senior therapists who have been trained by physiotherapists for at least three years perform this treatment – they're trained to target people's specific aches and pains, so the treatment is always highly customised to our guests' needs," says Shoshana Weinberg, Four Seasons' Senior Director of Spa Asia-Pacific. The 90- or 120-minute massage is performed whilst lying on a special Biomat, which uses infrared heat and negative ions to further ease muscle and joint pain.

"The surface of the mat is covered in amethyst crystals, which naturally produce healthy Far Infrared Rays. These penetrate six-to-eight inches into the innermost recesses of the body, reducing stress and fatigue," Weinberg explains. She recommends having the treatment before and after sporting activity, as it can help prevent the aches and pains that occur from using the same muscles repeatedly – whilst also relieving the stresses and anxieties that comes from everyday life.

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## CHIROPRACTIC

Dr. Gillian Tsang – registered chiropractor at Central multidisciplinary clinic, Up!health – believes that caring for your spine is the key to sporting success. “Chiropractors assess and treat painful complaints arising from loss of normal movement and joint function of the spine. Adjustments to the spine stimulate the nervous system, restoring movement and function to the joints – ultimately relieving pain.”

Dr. Tsang agrees that golfing injuries often arise due to the sport’s repetitive nature, explaining that chiropractic is an effective way to treat spinal conditions without drugs or surgery. “The majority of golf injuries are due to overuse. Lower back pain is a common complaint, as the swing phase involves forceful and repetitive spinal rotation, putting stress on the lumbar region. A flexed stance, along with bending and twisting, also exerts compressive force on the spine.” She continues, “Through adjusting the spine, any imbalances and compensations can be resolved.”

Dr. Tsang also recommends proactively supporting your recovery. “Sports massage works well when combined with chiropractic adjustments, and if you’re serious about golf, adding some strength and conditioning will help your performance. Pilates is great for strengthening core muscles, and thus protecting the lumbar spine.”

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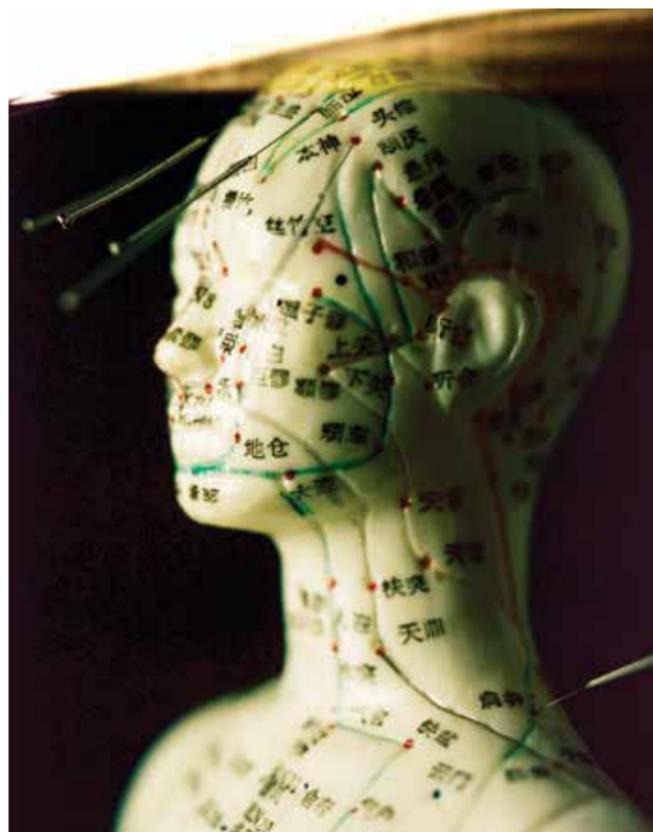
## ACUPUNCTURE

According to Gianna Buonocore, registered Chinese Medicine practitioner at Central’s Integrated Medicine Institute, the traditional practice of acupuncture can be especially effective in treating sporting injuries. “Most golfing injuries are due to overuse of muscles, and repeated movements of the wrists, shoulders, and neck. Acupuncture helps repair torn and inflamed muscles and tendons, and reduces congestion, tightness and restriction in the body”.

So how exactly does the process work? “Underpinning Traditional Chinese Medicine [TCM] is the concept of a smooth flow of blood, energy and fluids,” explains Buonocore. “Acupuncture’s principal action is to re-establish that flow, alleviating pain, tension and stiffness. It also releases pain-relieving endorphins, triggering the release of anti-inflammatory chemicals in the body that modify the experience of pain – this immediate release helps promote a rapid healing response.”

And there’s more to acupuncture than simply healing our aching muscles; studies show that it can be used to reduce stress, and improve sleep, focus and concentration. “We often overlook the importance of a strong mind when playing competitive sports,” Buonocore continues. “According to TCM, the body and mind are one unit, and so a serious sportsperson should not only work on their physical strength, but also on their mind.”

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## FLOAT THERAPY

Ciaran Hussey, of Mid-Levels floatation centre Float On, believes that float therapy can be an important tool in any sportsperson’s recovery. “The mineral magnesium is responsible for over 300 biochemical activities, yet it’s estimated that 75-80% of people in Hong Kong have a magnesium deficiency.” Hussey continues, “Floating in magnesium-rich water – our float pods contain up to 500 kilogrammes of Epsom salts – reduces high blood pressure and inflammation, offering pain relief for golfers after a long day on the course.”

The water is kept at a constant 35°C – skin temperature – which, along with the buoyancy created by the salts, ensures that it’s virtually impossible to distinguish parts of the body in contact with the water from those that aren’t. This enables you to experience almost total weightlessness once inside the pod. Hussey also believes that there are significant psychological benefits to floating, particularly for those who lead fast-paced lives. “Many top sportspeople use this time [in the float pod] to visualise, meditate or sleep. A single hour floating is equivalent to around four hours of sleep.”

Hussey recommends supplementing your float with a targeted audio programme. “We have a specific track called ‘Dreamscapes Golfing Mind’, based upon the same science underlying the best-selling mind-golf programme available today. This enables both amateurs and pros to learn to take strokes off their score as they relax.”  
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## CRYOTHERAPY

Cryotherapy is essentially a high-tech version of the humble ice pack, which has long been recommended by doctors as a quick and effective treatment for sports injuries. “Cryogenically cooled air – cooled to a temperature of below 30°C – penetrates deep into the body’s tissue layers to improve circulation,” explains Jane Wang, Cluster Director of Spa & Wellness at The Ritz-Carlton Hong Kong.

This increased circulation stimulates cell renewal thereby accelerating the healing process, with The Ritz-Carlton Spa’s Cryotherapy Massage combining the use of a machine that cools targeted areas of the body with deep-tissue massage techniques for “the ultimate rejuvenation”. “Cryotherapy targets specific areas to alleviate pain, reduce inflammation and speed up recovery from injuries,” Wang continues, mentioning that it’s frequently used to treat muscle soreness, stiff joints and even migraines. Cryotherapy also releases endorphins, which have a powerful analgesic effect.

The treatment is further enhanced with products from high-performance skincare line 111Skin – developed by Harley Street cosmetic surgeon Dr. Yannis Alexandrides to improve his patients’ rehabilitation time – including its antioxidant-rich Dramatic Healing Serum and Oil, which both boast potent anti-inflammatory benefits.

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