

Positive impact of golf on older Finnish golfers' physical activity and quality of life, even during the pandemic: Study

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The physical activity of older golfers in Finland increased and their quality of life remained on a good level despite COVID-19 restrictions,

according to a cross-sectional study conducted by researchers at the University of Eastern Finland and the University of Edinburgh. The researchers explored seasonal variation in physical activity and quality of life among older Finnish golfers during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study sheds light on the significant benefits of golf in promoting physical activity and well-being during challenging times.

Despite the COVID-19 restrictions in place in the summer of 2020, older golfers experienced a notable increase in [physical activity](#) levels compared to the general physical activity levels of seniors. The study found that their overall physical activity rose by 24%, with moderate physical activity increasing by an impressive 37%. Furthermore, walking activity saw a significant rise of 26%, while sedentary behavior decreased by 21% compared to the pre-COVID-19 winter season.

Intriguingly, the research also revealed a [positive association](#) between golf and physical activity levels. Around 80% of Finnish golfers reported using a push/pull cart to transport their golf clubs around the golf course, and more than 95% reported playing golf at least once a week. Engaging in a full 18-hole golf round was found to be positively correlated with moderate physical activity both in the summer and winter seasons. Additionally, in the summer season, playing a full 18-hole round of golf was associated with increased walking activity.

The study further demonstrated that older Finnish golfers reported a high quality of life during the COVID-19 restrictions in place in the summer of 2020, with over 90% of participants stating their quality of life to be good. This highlights the potential positive impact of golf on the overall well-being and quality of life, even during challenging periods characterized by pandemic-related restrictions.

"It's great how Finland's exceptional efforts to keep [golf courses](#) open during the COVID-19 pandemic have proven to have benefits, not only

in keeping senior golfers physically active, but also in promoting their [social engagement](#) and supporting their mental well-being during this time," says Julia Kettinen, the first author of the article and a Doctoral Researcher in Sports and Exercise Medicine at the Institute of Biomedicine, University of Eastern Finland.

Dr. Andrew Murray, Director of the Edinburgh Sports Medicine Research Network added, "Regular physical activity—such as golf—is one of the best things you can do for your health. It adds years to life, can help prevent and treat major diseases such as [heart disease](#), stroke, type 2 diabetes, and is good for the brain. As well as decreasing rates of dementia, anxiety and depression, exercise is good for well-being. Getting out in a green open space was beneficial for people during the pandemic and will always be beneficial."

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the benefits of golf as an outdoor exercise for older individuals, particularly during times of pandemic-related restrictions. Golf not only promotes physical activity but also contributes to an enhanced [quality of life](#) among older adults.

The study is published in the journal *Health Science Reports*.

More information: Julia Kettinen et al, The seasonal variation of physical activity and quality of life during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Finnish older golfers: A cross-sectional study, *Health Science Reports* (2023). [DOI: 10.1002/hsr2.1347](https://doi.org/10.1002/hsr2.1347)

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