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Golf's health benefits should be more available to all, experts say

More people should be encouraged to play golf and enjoy its many health benefits, an international panel of experts has concluded.

Playing the sport regularly is linked to better physical and mental health and a longer lifespan, according to the study, which is published to coincide with this week's Ryder Cup.

The study engaged some of golf's leading figures, sporting bodies, policy experts and public health groups, who reviewed studies on the sport to build an evidence-based consensus on golf and health.

They suggest that the sport should inspire more girls and women to play and develop clubs and courses that are attractive to all, building on current outreach initiatives.

Clubs should consider adding features such as gyms and walking routes and could consider providing child care on-site, the consensus shows.

Using electronic questionnaires, researchers led by the University of Edinburgh engaged an international panel of experts, including the World Golf Foundation and The R&A. They have proposed improvements to the game based on more than 300 existing studies on golf's associations with health.

The international consensus also suggests that price structures should be developed with entry-level players – rather than club members – in mind.

The study, published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, further recommends grassroots initiatives to support the development of golf in places where it is a relatively new sport.

It is hoped that the recommendations will give the golf industry and would-be players a better understanding of how to realise potential health benefits of the game.

Lead researcher Dr Andrew Murray from the Physical Activity for Health Research Centre at the University of Edinburgh, said: "Golfers stand to gain physical health, mental health and longevity benefits by playing the sport regularly."

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“We advise golfers to play often, to walk the course and to warm up properly, which can help improve their score and decrease the chance of injury.

“We hope that the consensus will contribute to an improved understanding of golf’s potential benefits and aid the golf industry in making decisions that improve health and wellbeing across society.”

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