

GPs urged to refer patients for golf

A new report that shows that golf builds muscle strength, reduces blood pressure and improves life satisfaction has led to health professionals being urged to refer older and inactive patients for golf lessons.

It is hoped the joint report from ukactive, England Golf and Mytime Active will inspire doctors and patients.

Golf on Referral is based on two research pilots that saw selected patients referred for a six-week behaviour change and golf lesson programme, with their mental and physical wellbeing tracked over the course of the project.

The programme was designed to take inactive people at risk of chronic conditions and introduce them to golf at the same time as incorporating group support, helping

improve patients' physical, mental and emotional health.

Researchers found that grip strength, a strong indicator of vitality in older people, increased significantly over the course of the study – suggesting improvements in muscle strength and therefore reduced risk of falls or disability.

Life satisfaction levels also rose across the vast majority of participants, along with happiness, highlighting clear benefits from the programme. Anxiety was shown to increase slightly – although it remained below the national average.

Other findings showed that participants:

- Trebled their amount of vigorous exercise per week
- Saw reductions in both systolic and diastolic blood pressure
- Improved their golfing skills significantly.

Steven Ward, ukactive CEO said: "Golf is a fantastic way to encourage people to be more active, particularly among parts of the population who may not be too engaged with other activities."

