PREVENTING PICKLEBALL INJURIES

As most pickleball players can attest, swinging a racquet a few hundred times and chasing a ball around a court can lead to some painful problems. The most common injuries are sprains and strains of the hips, knees, dominant shoulder and elbow, and low back.

INJURIES

HAND & WRIST INJURIES

Attach a long lever to a small joint and swiftly hit a ball - What could go wrong? Anything from overuse strains to broken bones.

ELBOW TENDONITIS

Firmly gripping a racquet places stress on the bony bumps where your wrist and forearm muscles attach to your elbow. This is often a site of tendinitis within pickleball players.

KNEE PAIN

Running and pivoting places tremendous torque on your knees. This stress can damage ligaments and irritate joint cartilage.

BACK PAIN

Continually bending forward and quickly rotating places tremendous stress on your spine's soft tissues and joints. Injuries to muscles, ligaments, and discs are common.

ROTATOR CUFF PROBLEMS

Repeatedly raising your arm can pinch sensitive tendons and bursa. Unchecked, small irritations can transition to more significant tears over time.



TIPS

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING INJURY-PREVENTION TIPS:

- ✓ Stretch and get some blood flowing with a brisk 10-minute walk before hitting the court.
- ✓ Choose shoes with proper arch supports, or consider aftermarket insoles or custom orthotics.
- ✓ Warm-up before the match with the exercises below.
- ✓ Make sure you are well hydrated before, during, and after your match. Replace your fluids, whether you feel thirsty or not. (Alcohol and caffeine don't help.)
- ✓ Learn and practice proper pickleball techniques, including your grip, swing, and footwork.
- ✓ Some mild soreness is acceptable, but don't hesitate to stop in the middle of a match if you experience more significant or sharp pain.

EXERCISES

MANY PICKLEBALL-RELATED INJURIES CAN BE PREVENTED WITH PROPER WARM-UP. THE FOLLOWING STRETCHES CAN HELP YOU LOOSEN UP BEFORE YOUR NEXT MATCH.



CROSS BODY: While sitting or standing, bring your involved arm across the front of your upper chest as shown in the picture. Hold the affected elbow with your uninvolved arm and gently pull across your chest until a stretch is felt in the back of your shoulder. Relax and stretch the arm further across your body. Perform as directed.



WRIST WAVES: Interlock your fingers then elevate both arms as though you were resting the underside of your forearms on a table at chest level. Your palms should be facing down, elbows out to the side. Begin performing a "wave" by flexing one of your wrists and letting it flow through the opposite wrist. Allow relaxed movement from your wrists, elbows, and shoulders as you perform a smooth wave moving from one arm to the other. Initiate this flowing movement from one hand for 30 seconds, then the other for 30 seconds. Repeat as directed.



WRIST FLEXOR STRETCH: Straighten your arm in front of you with your hand at chest level, palm up. Keep your elbow locked and use your opposite hand to grasp your fingers and gently pull down on your fingers until you feel a stretch in your forearm. Keep your elbow straight throughout the exercise. Against the resistance of your opposite hand, contract your wrist and fingers upward for seven seconds. Relax and increase the stretch on your wrist and forearm by pulling downward and backward on your fingers. "Lock in" to the new position and repeat three contract/relax cycles twice per day or as directed.



WRIST EXTENSOR STRETCH: Begin standing with your arm straightened in front of you at chest level. Keep your elbow straight and flex your wrist so that your fingers are pointed toward the floor. With your opposite hand, grasp the back of your hand and bend your wrist and fingers downward into flexion. You may rotate your wrist toward your small finger to further increase the stretch. Against the resistance of your opposite hand, attempt to straighten your wrist for seven seconds. Relax and stretch your wrist and fingers further. "Lock in" to this new position and repeat three contract/relax cycles twice per day or as directed.



UPPER BODY STRETCH: Stand and reach straight up overhead with both arms while grasping a broomstick or golf club. Your hands and feet should both be shoulder-width apart. Slowly rotate your entire body to one side, hold that position for 3-5 seconds, then slowly rotate to the other side. Return to center and bend first to the right and then to left. Repeat as directed.



HIP SWINGS: Stand on one leg and lean slightly forward to place your outstretched hands on a wall, counter, or another stable object at chest level. Swing your free leg in front of you in a brisk "pendulum" motion, aligned with the plane of the wall. Try to keep your low back stable and slightly arched to avoid twisting or slouching. Swing your leg as far as possible in each direction for 10-30 seconds, then repeat on the opposite side.



HAMSTRING STRETCH: Stand with your heel propped up on an elevated surface, keeping your knee and back straight as shown in the picture. Slowly lean forward at your hip, not through your back, until a stretch is felt in the hamstring. Contract your hamstring to push your heel downward for seven seconds. Relax and lean forward through your hip to further stretch your hamstring. Keep your knee and back straight throughout this exercise. Perform as directed.



CALF STRETCH: Stand facing a wall with your hands on the wall at head level. Your affected leg to be stretched should be back and straight with your heel on the floor. Your unaffected leg may be bent in front of you for support. While keeping your back straight, lean forward until you feel a stretch in your calf. Against the resistance of the floor, attempt to push the toes of your trailing foot into the floor for seven seconds. Do not lift your heel off of the floor. Relax and lean further forward to increase the stretch. "Lock in" to this new position and repeat three contract/relax cycles on each side twice per day or as directed.