

# **PICKLEBALL** **Injury** **Prevention** **GUIDE**



**PLAY SMART PLAY SAFE**

*Pickleball is a fun and engaging sport, accessible to all ages and skill levels.*

*This guide provides advice to help players prevent injuries and enjoy the game safely.*

## Let's start with STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING

Maintaining strength and conditioning is essential for preventing common pickleball injuries, by supporting joint stability, balance, and overall mobility. A consistent fitness routine (up to 3 to 4 strength sessions per week) helps preserve functional movement and reduces the risk of strains, sprains, and falls on the court.

**Target muscle groups:** Trunk, Hips, Knees, Shoulders

### Flexibility

Regular stretching exercises for the whole body, preferably when the body is warm at the completion of a session.

**Target muscle groups:** calves, quadriceps, hamstrings, glutes, pecs, deltoids

### Cardiovascular Fitness

**Activities:** Running, cycling, and swimming.

**Frequency:** At least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous aerobic activity per week.

Consider having a tailored exercise plan developed for your individual needs. Consulting with a health professional can help you avoid injury and maximise your results.

# READY TO PLAY

## WARM-UP & COOL-DOWN

### Warm-Up and Stretching

Before stepping onto the court, take a few minutes to warm up your body. A proper warm-up increases blood flow and reduces the risk of injury.

- ◆ Light Cardio: A brisk walk or gentle jog for 5-10 minutes.
- ◆ Dynamic Stretching: Arm circles, shoulder rolls and leg swings to increase blood flow to the muscles.
- ◆ Pickleball-Specific Movements: Practice lunges/jumping and side shuffles to prepare for quick court movements and prepare for sudden muscle contractions, increase joint range of motion and prepare the body for the physical demands of the game.

### Cool-Down

Helps to gradually lower heart rate, reduce muscle stiffness, and enhance recovery.

- ◆ Activities: Gentle stretching, walking, for 5-10 mins

#### Did you know....?

57% of adults aged 65 and over did not meet the physical activity component of the guidelines;  
84% did not do enough muscle-strengthening activities.

(Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2024)

## THE CORRECT FOOTWEAR

Wearing the correct shoes can prevent slips and falls.

- ◆ Choose court shoes with good grip and lateral support (e.g. tennis shoes or netball/basketball shoes)
- ◆ Avoid running shoes, as they lack side support and increase the risk of ankle injuries.
- ◆ Replace worn-out shoes to maintain proper traction.

## HYDRATION & NUTRITION

- ◆ Drink plenty of water before, during, and after play to stay hydrated.
- ◆ Eat a balanced meal 2-3 hours before playing to keep your energy levels up.
- ◆ Bring snacks like bananas or protein bars for longer play sessions.

### **Bone Health**

*Know your risks for developing osteoporosis*

The most reliable way to diagnose osteoporosis is to measure bone density. Check with your GP if you have any risk factors. You may be eligible for a Medicare funded DXA scan which will diagnose osteoporosis and osteopenia (low bone mass).

Weight bearing exercise is the most important type of exercise for preventing osteoporosis. This assists with slowing the loss of bone strength to reduce the risk of fractures.

Balance exercises are also important to incorporate to reduce the risk and falls (and fractures).

More information here:

<https://www.buildbetterbones.org/patients/prevention>

## SAFE COURT MOVEMENT

- ◆ Keep your knees slightly bent and stay on the balls of your feet.
- ◆ Avoid running backwards to retrieve lobs; instead, turn the hips and sidestep to reach the ball safely.
- ◆ Communicate with your partner to prevent collisions in doubles play.
- ◆ Be aware of fatigue whilst playing and take breaks if needed.

## PREVENTING OVERUSE INJURIES

- ◆ Take rest days to allow your muscles and joints to recover.
- ◆ Get enough sleep! This is one of the best ways to recover after matches.
- ◆ Use proper paddle grip and stroke mechanics to reduce strain on the wrist and elbow - consider lessons if needed.
- ◆ Recognise and respond to early signs of injury and consult a healthcare provider if symptoms persist or worsen.
- ◆ Do strength/balance training 3-4 times per week. See video for some ideas

## AWARENESS OF COURT CONDITIONS

- ◆ Check the court surface for cracks, debris, or moisture that could cause slipping.
- ◆ Be mindful of surrounding obstacles like barriers or benches.
- ◆ Avoid playing in extreme heat without proper precautions (review the Risk Prevention Policy for heat related recommendations)



**DRYSDALE**  
CLIFTON SPRINGS  
PICKLEBALL

## **PLAY SMART, PLAY SAFE**

For more information on Injury Prevention strategies,  
visit <https://dcspickleball.org/>

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