

# Common Injuries in Pickleball

The most prevalent injuries among pickleball players include sprains, strains, tennis elbow, rotator cuff, and ankle injuries. These can occur due to overexertion, sudden movements, repetitive motions, lack of proper warm-up, water on the court, and collisions with other players or objects.

Causes and contributing factors of these injuries in pickleball include improper technique, inadequate conditioning, lack of flexibility, playing beyond one's physical limits, and using inappropriate equipment.

### 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 tendonitis 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.

## What's the difference between pickleball and tennis injuries?

In recent years, there has been a rise in pickleball-related injuries. These injuries share similarities with those from other racquet sports but exhibit distinct characteristics, such as a growing trend in popularity and older patient age. Older unskilled players require unique injury prevention and management strategies.

***The Journal of Emergency Medicine published an analysis in 2019 that approximated 19,000 pickleball injuries in 2017. Ninety percent of these injuries affected people over 50, with 50.4% male.***

**Chiropractors can play a role in helping people prevent injuries associated with pickleball by providing the following services and guidance:**

**Musculoskeletal Assessment:** Chiropractors can assess an individual's musculoskeletal health to identify any existing imbalances, weaknesses, or alignment issues that might make them more susceptible to injuries during pickleball. This assessment can help create a personalized injury prevention plan.

**Joint Mobility:** Chiropractors can help improve joint mobility, particularly in areas prone to injury in pickleball, such as the shoulders, elbows, wrists, and knees. This increased mobility can enhance flexibility and reduce the chances of injury.

**Stretching and Strengthening Exercises:** Chiropractors can prescribe specific stretching and strengthening exercises tailored to the individual's needs. These exercises can target muscle groups used in pickleball, enhancing strength and flexibility, which can prevent injuries.

**Education:** Chiropractors can educate pickleball players about proper warm-up and cool-down routines, emphasizing the importance of dynamic stretching and injury prevention strategies. They can also guide equipment selection and proper technique to minimize injury risk.

**Nutritional Guidance:** Chiropractors can provide nutritional advice to promote healthy joints, muscles, and overall well-being, indirectly preventing injury.

## Steps to Prevent Pickleball Injuries?

Regarding pickleball, staying injury-free is crucial for long-term enjoyment of the sport. You can significantly reduce the risk of pickleball injuries by implementing effective prevention strategies. This includes incorporating warm-up exercises, stretching routines, and strength conditioning exercises to prepare your body for the game and improve overall fitness. Additionally, staying informed through injury prevention programs and seeking professional guidance is essential. Chiropractors can help assess and enhance your musculoskeletal health, providing a safer and more enjoyable pickleball experience.

EXERCISES	MANY PICKLEBALL-RELATED INJURIES CAN BE PREPARED WITH PROPER WARM-UP. THE FOLLOWING STRETCHES CAN HELP YOU LOOSEN UP BEFORE YOUR NEXT MATCH.
	<b>CROSS BODY:</b> 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 uninjured 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.
	<b>WRIST WAVES:</b> 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.
	<b>WRIST FLEXOR STRETCH:</b> 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.
	<b>WRIST EXTENSOR STRETCH:</b> 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.
	<b>UPPER BODY STRETCH:</b> 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.
	<b>HIP SWINGS:</b> 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.
	<b>HAMSTRING STRETCH:</b> 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.
	<b>CALF STRETCH:</b> 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.