



## Why Is Tennis Safety Important?

Ok. So you've just got yourself some quality shoes, a racquet, and a friend, and you're ready to go. But before you do here are a few points we'd like you to consider.

Injuries in tennis are rare, but are something you need to be aware of before you start playing. We've all heard of "tennis elbow," which is one of a number of repetitive-stress injuries (RSIs) that can result from playing tennis. Traumatic injuries are also a possibility, from sprained ankles to torn ligaments and even concussions.

To learn how to minimize your risk of injury while playing tennis, follow these safety tips:

Tennis injuries fall into two categories: cumulative injuries that result from overuse, and acute or traumatic injuries caused by sudden force or impact.

Cumulative injuries include tennis elbow (lateral epicondylitis), elbow bursitis, rotator cuff and shoulder tendonitis, frozen shoulder (adhesive capsulitis), wrist tendonitis, and Achilles tendonitis.

Acute injuries include torn rotator cuffs, shoulder separation, wrist and ankle sprains, Achilles tendon rupture, hamstring pulls or tears, muscle sprains or strains, and torn knee ligaments.

## Gear Guidelines

Tennis gear may seem pretty straightforward, but putting some thought into the racquet, socks, and shoes you use can go a long way toward preventing injuries.

Here are a few basic guidelines to follow when choosing equipment:

- **Racquet.** Using a racquet that is too light or too heavy can increase your risk of shoulder and elbow injuries. Likewise, a racquet with the wrong grip size or the wrong amount of tension in the strings can be hard on your wrists and arms. Consult a trained professional at a tennis specialty shop to make sure you get a racquet that is appropriate for your size and skill level.
- **Tennis Shoes.** Be sure to get shoes that are specifically designed for tennis and that match your foot type. These shoes will support your heel and help keep your ankle from rolling, and they're made to decrease side-to-side sliding, which can take a toll on your ankles and feet.

- **Socks.** Choose socks made from synthetic fabrics rather than cotton, as these will help keep your feet dry and prevent blisters. For added support, you might want to consider wearing two pairs of socks or specially padded tennis socks.

## **Before You Play**

As with any sport, staying in shape will help your game and help you prevent injuries. This means getting plenty of exercise and eating right year round. Also, as with all sports, you should warm up and stretch well before playing tennis. Do some jumping jacks or run in place for a minute or two to get the blood flowing, and then stretch your arms, wrists, shoulders, and legs, holding each stretch for at least 30 seconds.

Inspect the court where you will be playing before you start. If it's a hard court, be sure there are no cracks or holes that might trip you up. Our courts are Tiger Turf and Tarmac. Be sure there are no loose tennis balls or other objects on or near the court. If you plan to play at night, be sure the court is well lit. And never play on a wet court, regardless of whether it's a hard court or soft court. Even the slightest amount of moisture on a court will make it slippery — and that can lead to injury.

## **First Aid**

Make sure there is first aid available wherever you play, (**It's in the Kitchen**) as well as someone who knows how to administer it. Be sure to note the location of a nearby phone in the event of an emergency. Lastly, make sure to drink plenty of water before you play. If it's a sunny day, apply sunscreen to any exposed skin, and wear a hat and light-coloured clothing to help keep yourself cool.

## **While Playing**

Using proper technique will not only make you a better tennis player, it will also help to prevent injuries. For instance, when serving or hitting an overhand, try not to arch your back too much, and instead focus on bending your knees and raising your heels. Also, try to avoid landing on the balls of your feet, as this can lead to an Achilles tendon injury. If you have questions about your technique, consider taking a lesson from a trained instructor.

Have water on hand to drink during breaks in play, and try to take some time to rest in the shade between games and sets. If the handle of your racquet becomes wet from perspiration, dry it frequently to avoid getting blisters on your hands.

If you feel any pain or discomfort in your joints or muscles, stop playing immediately. Don't resume playing until you have completely recovered. Playing through pain will only make injuries worse.

If you get an acute or traumatic injury, seek immediate medical attention. If you've had a previous injury, get expert advice on taping or bracing your injured body part.

## **A Few Other Reminders**

- Take time to cool down and drink plenty of water after you've played. This will help stave off muscle soreness and stiffness in the joints.
- Give yourself plenty of time off to rest between matches and training sessions. Overexertion is one of the most common causes of tennis injuries. Your body needs time to recover. This will not only help prevent injuries, it will also help you get the most out of your abilities.
- Avoid playing in adverse weather conditions. Extremely hot weather presents a real risk of heat stroke. Cold weather can lead to stiff muscles that are more susceptible to tears and sprains, and windy weather can increase the risk of tendonitis and other RSIs.

Before you play a match, practice hitting with a friend or take lessons from the professional instructor. This will allow you to ease into the sport without putting undue stress on your body. Practice playing the right way, and remember to always warm up and cool down, and you can successfully avoid most common injuries. Next thing you know, that might be you serving for the championship at Wimbledon.