

# HEALTHY LIVING



## Tennis, Anyone? Injury-Prevention Tips

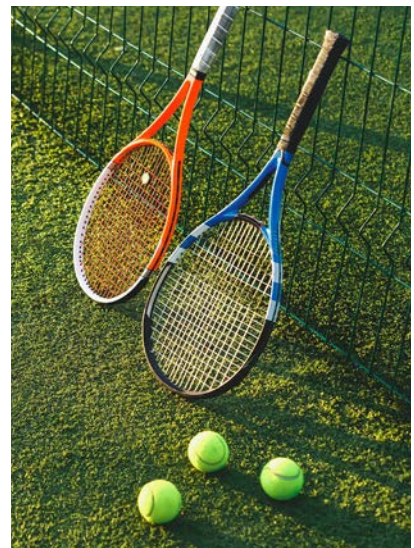
When it comes to tennis, the combination of both high and low-exertion levels of the game can bring not only a unique exercise experience, but also tremendous health benefits. During a time when more people are going outside for exercise and recreational activities, tennis offers other important benefits: it is an outdoor sport and you only need two people to play.

Tennis is also convenient. In fact, if you can find a tennis facility that has a tennis wall, or a wall with a horizontal line that simulates a tennis net, you can get a great tennis workout all by yourself. In addition to enhancing your cardiovascular health, playing tennis can tone the muscles of your upper and lower body, burn calories, and improve your balance, hand-eye coordination and agility.

The American Chiropractic Association (ACA) suggests the simple measures below to help you avoid injuries and improve your game.

### Clothes, Shoes and Socks

- Keep your feet dry by wearing socks. Use foot powder to prevent blisters.
- Avoid wearing tight clothes that pinch any part of your body. These “pinch points” can inhibit circulation, causing you to tire more quickly. They can also cause uncomfortable blisters and rashes.
- Because of the constant pounding on your feet, it is critical to select a true tennis shoe. Don’t purchase shoes designed for basketball, running or cross-training. The tennis shoe should be low to the ground, yet be able to absorb shock to minimize stress on your feet.
- Choose socks and clothes made from fabrics that absorb perspiration, allowing the skin to “breathe.” Some synthetic fabrics are engineered to “wick” the perspiration away from the body. Good old cotton and acrylic also work well.





## Choosing a Racket

- The grip of your racket should be thick enough for your hand to fit around it without having your thumb and fingers overlap one another.
- The racket should be comfortably cushioned to absorb the shock that comes from hitting a tennis ball.
- Don't pick out a bigger racket to give you a better chance at hitting the ball. With an oversized racket, you tend to catch the ball on the extreme edges of the racket, which can twist your hands and wrists beyond their normal range of motion. Instead, look for a normal-sized racket, with a hitting area of 105 square inches or smaller.

## Avoiding Injuries

Select a tennis court with a safe playing surface. Because your knees, hips and feet will take a pounding, surfaces that have some give—such as cushioned surfaces or even grass—are better than concrete.

- Check the tennis court for trash, sand or other objects that can make it easy for you to lose your footing when practicing or playing.
- If you are a beginning player, take tennis lessons. There is value in learning good tennis habits and proper form, which will help take pressure off your wrists, spine and hips. If taking lessons is not an option, books and videos can be very helpful in familiarizing your mind and body with the game.
- Warm up before practicing or playing. Rotate your legs, shoulders, hands and elbows in a slow, circular motion. Also, move forward and back, then left and right, across your end of the tennis court, simulating the movements you would make when actually playing, but do it more slowly and deliberately.
- Drink water. When playing tennis, you lose a lot of fluids. Avoid sodas because your body must use more water to push them out of your system than they put into your body.

Even with the best preventive measures, pain and injury can be a fact of life with any sport. If you experience pain or injury beyond simple muscle soreness, visit your doctor of chiropractic. Chiropractors are uniquely trained to treat common tennis injuries, such as tennis elbow, shoulder injuries, low back injuries, sprained ankles and knees. They can also help you choose proper rehabilitation exercises and prevention techniques to get you back on the court and reduce the likelihood of future injuries.

*Scott Bautch, DC, DACBOH, of the ACA Council on Occupational Health, contributed to this article.*

**For more information on prevention and wellness, or to find an ACA chiropractor near you, visit [www.HandsDownBetter.org](http://www.HandsDownBetter.org)**



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