

Pickleball Safety and Injury Prevention

Pickleball is a physical activity that can result in injuries from,

- * slips, trips and falls
- * playing on wet or slippery surfaces
- * collisions with other players, the court, fencing, net posts or other structures
- * overreaching, overextending, lunging and loss of balance
- * being struck by another player's paddle
- * being struck in the eye by a ball
- * stepping on a ball and twisting an ankle or falling
- * repetitive stress, particularly on the elbow

All players need to be aware of the risks and the steps that should be taken to reduce the possibility of injury. To reduce the risk of injury, players should wear and use proper equipment, follow safe playing procedures and use good pickleball techniques.

Equipment

- * wear tennis shoes to reduce the risk of catching an edge and falling,
 - wearing running shoes or sneakers increases the risk of injury
 - sandals and flip flops are totally unacceptable
- * eye protection is strongly recommended
 - the edges of the holes on a spinning pickleball can cut and seriously damage eye tissue
 - wear regular glasses, sunglasses, safety glasses or squash glasses to reduce the risk
- * avoid using a paddle that is too heavy for you
 - paddles in the 7 to 8 ounce range are right for most players
- * avoid using a paddle with a grip that is too large or too small for your hand
 - the grip should feel comfortable in your hand
 - with a normal grip there should be a space between the ends of your fingers and thumb pad
 - the space should be about the width of your little finger

Playing Procedures and Techniques

- * back pedaling is the most common cause of falls and serious pickleball injuries
 - poor footwear amplifies the risk
 - do not backpedal when moving back on the court to play a lob hit over your head
 - to move back to cover a lob, start with a pivot and drop step while tracking the ball
 - on short lobs this will put you in position to hit an attacking overhead shot
 - on deep lobs this will allow you to safely run into position to return the lob
- * avoid court positioning with one player up and one player back
 - one up and one back may result in a collision when both players go for a ball
 - with one up and one back, both players risk falls due to overreaching or lunging
 - in addition to falls, overreaching and lunging can result in strained or torn muscles
 - move up and back on the court with your partner
 - playing at the same distance from the net as your partner will reduce the risk of injury
 - with one up and one back, the deeper player is responsible for avoiding collisions

Other

- * avoid playing on wet or slippery surfaces
- * communicate with your partner, call “me” or “you” on balls either of you could hit
- * when a stray ball comes on your court, call “ball in”, stop play and replay the point
- * when your ball goes onto an adjoining court, warn the players on the adjoining court
- * tennis elbow is frequently due to faulty technique on backhand shots
 - avoid letting the injury become chronic
 - get physio as required and consider using a protective strap, brace or sleeve
 - seek instruction from a qualified coach

Players New to the game

- * players new to the game tend to be injured more frequently than experienced players, factors include,
 - age, balance, coordination and fitness level
 - poor footwear, trying too hard and going for everything
 - lunging for balls that don't bounce as expected
 - playing aggressively before the body is accustomed to the requirements of the game

Stay Under Control

- * stay under control, avoid lunging, overreaching or running all over the court
- * if you find yourself running all over the court while playing doubles
 - stop, that isn't how the game is played
 - reduce running around by learning to hit volleys, half volleys and balls on the rise
- * stay under control, no rally or point is important enough to risk injury