

# Minimizing tennis injuries



## GUEST CORNER

LIZE LUBBE

With warmer weather around the corner, getting out in the fresh air playing tennis is good exercise for young and old. Tennis is not only a year-round social game but improves our cardiovascular fitness, balance, and hand-eye coordination.

### Causes of most common tennis injuries:

The tennis game involves explosive forces through your upper extremities and fast acceleration and deceleration from your lower extremities. Therefore, most shoulder, elbow and wrist injuries are from chronic repetitive, overuse movements and hip, knee and ankle injuries are mostly acute injuries from sudden torquing and fast-pace movements.

**Shoulder and wrist injuries:** the serve is the most strenuous stroke because of the overhead reach, followed by the ball impact then a multidirectional movement by your wrist, through your spine to your ankles. The repetitive swinging of the racquet with ball impact can cause shoulder rotator cuff tears and impingement, tennis elbow tendinitis and wrist strains. As a reminder, tennis elbow or lateral epicondylitis is the forearm/wrist muscles forming tendons on the outside part of your elbow and becomes inflamed from overuse and/or an incorrect racquet grip as well as being “too wristy” - not having a stable wrist position during your tennis stroke.

**Leg injuries** result from the fast pace running back and forth, sudden stop-turn, jumping and overreaching and stretching.

- Knee injuries can affect the patella (kneecap) causing tendinitis where the front knee tendon gets inflamed (a “jumper’s knee”).

- Muscle spasm, strains and tears in mostly the hamstring muscle (back of your thigh) calf and abdominal/groin muscles.

- Ankle sprains occur when the ankle is twisted, and the outside ankle ligaments are overstretched or torn.

**Lower back injuries** result mostly from hyper extension of the lower back during serve, overhead shots, or deep ground strokes.

### Preventing or minimizing tennis injuries

You can minimize tennis injuries through correct preparation by maintaining your fitness, flexibility, wearing proper footwear and using a correct racquet grip and technique.

The following conditioning tips will get you ready for a pain-free tennis season:

1. Improve your general fitness by increasing your cardiovascular conditioning. A tennis match can go on for hours and, if your fitness level and endurance are lacking, you are more prone to injuries as your body fatigues.

2. Include stretches in your daily workout routine.

- Hamstring stretches can be done either seated in a chair: stretch one leg out in front of you, both hands reaching to your ankle, or laying on your back: one leg bent and foot flat on ground and the stretched leg up in the air with a strap around your foot stretching the leg gently to your chest. Hold the stretch 15-20 sec. and never bounce a stretch and go gently into a stretch.

3. To minimize rotator cuff injuries, focus on your shoulder girdle stability.

- Lean with your elbows on a table in a semi-plank position. Engage your core. Pull shoulder blades down and pinch shoulder blades together and push away (pro/retraction) hold each 5 sec. for 10 reps.

4. A pre-game warm-up exercise of about 15 minutes is critical and should include fast pace movements as well as dynamic stretches. Your warm-up routine prepares your body by increasing your body temperature and blood flow to the muscles, stretches the muscles and joints, and it helps to wake up the nervous system and muscle memory to prepare for coming vigorous physical activity. Perform all exercises in a controlled manner, taking deep breaths, maintaining your balance and engage your core and pelvic floor muscles.

- **Side shuffles** with knees slightly bent and your body in the “ready position” rotating torso and arms from side to side. Then progress to karaoke moves (shoulders square and performing zig-zag twists with your hips and legs), running movements lifting your knees up to your chest and circling your arms at the same time; straight leg marches by kicking your one leg straight up in front of your body to meet your opposite hand and arm; and finally leg swings with gentle torso twists.

- **Side lunges:** take a big step to the right keeping your left knee straight and toes pointing forward and right knee bent with left arm overhead, twisting your torso to the right. Hold a few seconds and repeat to left side. Focus on keeping your balance at the same time

- **Forward lunge:** take a big step forward with your one leg keeping the back heel down and feel the stretch in your

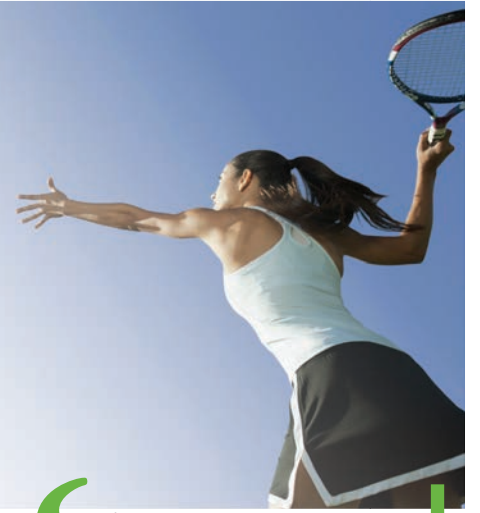
calf. Hold for a few seconds. Then weight bear onto your back leg and straighten your front leg to feel the stretch behind your thigh in your hamstring muscle. Repeat to the other side.

- **Knee to chest tucks:** Bring one knee bent up to your chest and pull your thigh to your chest using your arms. Repeat with other leg – keep walking as you alternate one leg to chest tucks.

- Mimic a forehand, back hand, overhead shots to reenforce your muscle memory to get your mind and body ready for the game.

Enjoy a healthy, injury-free tennis season and contact your physician or physical therapist timely if you experience any physical discomfort that may hinder your game.

*Lize Lubbe is the owner of Lize Lubbe Physical Therapy with its main practice located at 892 Route 35 in Cross River and a PT Studio in the premises of Apex Fitness (where her team focus on the rehabilitation of sports-related injuries). Learn more by calling 914-875-9430, emailing [contact@lizelubbept.com](mailto:contact@lizelubbept.com) or visiting [www.lizelubbept.com](http://www.lizelubbept.com)*



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**-Lize Lubbe**  
Physical Therapist at  
Lize Lubbe Physical Therapy



*Lize Lubbe Physical Therapy (LLPT) has opened a PT Studio on the premises of Apex Fitness (at Orchard Square at Cross River) to focus on sports-related physical therapy rehabilitation services.*

*Our PT Studio at Apex will serve the needs of high school and college athletes, runners, golfers and tennis players, devotees and “weekend warrior” work-out gym members, and non-gym members, and other sport enthusiasts to continue their fitness goals, free of pain and to restore full pain-free mobility after injury.*

*Our PT Studio will be staffed with physical therapists who specialize in working with athletes, young and old. Our team provides dedicated, personable hands-on physical therapy rehabilitation services to help you prevent injuries and, if injured, to accelerate your recovery.*

### The professional services of our team at the PT Studio include the following:

- A free walk-in basic sports-related injury screening of about 10 minutes
- Guidance on sport-specific warm-up and exercise programs
- Brief assessment and Kinesio taping
- Individualized full PT rehabilitation treatment programs to recover from injury or surgery with full access to all the equipment at Apex Fitness, to get you back practicing your chosen sport, pain-free



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