NONSURGICAL ORTHOPEDICS — KEY WEST CONCIERGE ORTHOPEDICS

Most Common Pickleball Injuries in Florida and Tips by Dr. Jason Pirozzolo

Most Common Pickleball Injuries in Florida

Pickleball, one of Florida's fastest-growing sports, combines elements of tennis, badminton, and ping-pong. Its popularity has skyrocketed among all age groups, especially retirees. Despite its low-impact reputation, injuries are more common than many enthusiasts expect. Dr. Jason Pirozzolo, a renowned sports medicine physician, emphasizes that understanding these injuries is critical for prevention and recovery.

"Pickleball may look simple, but it involves quick reflexes, lateral movements, and repeated swings, all of which can strain the body," says Dr. Jason Pirozzolo. Florida's warm climate and active communities make it a hub for players, but the state's higher participation rates also mean more injury risks.

Overuse injuries top the list. *Tennis elbow* (lateral epicondylitis) is common due to repetitive forehand and backhand motions. Dr. Pirozzolo explains, **"Tennis elbow occurs when the tendons in your forearm are overworked, often from improper technique or inadequate warm-ups."** Addressing this involves improving swing mechanics and using elbow braces for support.

Another frequent issue is **rotator cuff injuries**, particularly among older players. The quick overhead serves and smashes required in pickleball can strain shoulder tendons. **"Rotator cuff tears or strains are serious and often require physical therapy or even surgery in severe cases,"** Dr. Pirozzolo advises. Using proper equipment and engaging in regular strengthening exercises can mitigate this risk.

Foot and ankle problems are also prevalent. Florida's outdoor courts often have hard surfaces, which exacerbate **Achilles tendonitis** and plantar fasciitis. **"Players should wear shoes with good arch support and cushioning,"** notes Dr. Jason Pirozzolo. Besides that, regular stretching before and after matches is essential.

Most importantly, knee injuries like **meniscus tears** occur due to sudden pivoting movements. **"Many players overestimate their ability to change directions quickly, which puts excessive stress on their knees,"** Dr. Pirozzolo explains. Strengthening surrounding muscles, such as the quadriceps and hamstrings, can help stabilize the knee joint.

Beyond joint-related injuries, *dehydration* and *heat exhaustion* are significant concerns, especially in Florida's humid environment. **"People underestimate how much water they lose during a game,"** says Dr. Pirozzolo. **"Hydrating before, during, and after play is non-negotiable, particularly in high temperatures."** Wearing moisture-wicking clothing and scheduling matches during cooler parts of the day can also reduce

risks.

Injuries aren't limited to seasoned players. Beginners often face **wrist sprains** from poor paddle control and falls. Dr. Pirozzolo recommends, **"Start slow and focus on learning proper form. Avoid diving for balls until you're comfortable with your movements."** Protective gear like wrist guards can provide additional support.

Pickleball also takes a toll on the lower back. Prolonged bending and twisting movements can lead to **lumbar strains**. Dr. Pirozzolo suggests incorporating core-strengthening exercises like planks and avoiding overstretching during play. **"Listen to your body. If you feel discomfort, stop and assess. Pushing through pain only worsens the issue,"** he cautions.

One of the more surprising trends is the rise in **eye injuries** caused by high-speed balls. Protective eyewear is essential. **"It only takes one stray ball to cause significant damage,"** warns Dr. Jason Pirozzolo. Fortunately, lightweight and comfortable goggles are widely available, making this an easy safety measure to adopt.

While pickleball is accessible to people of all fitness levels, Florida's aging demographic faces unique risks. Older players are particularly vulnerable to **hip fractures** from falls. **"Maintaining good balance and wearing court-specific shoes with proper grip can significantly reduce fall risks,"** advises Dr. Pirozzolo.

Recovery from these injuries often requires a multi-pronged approach. Physical therapy, rest, and anti-inflammatory medications can help. However, Dr. Pirozzolo emphasizes the importance of prevention. **"A proper warm-up routine, including dynamic stretches and light cardio, can dramatically reduce injury risks,"** he says.

Hydration, sunscreen, and rest are equally vital. Florida's climate can be unforgiving, and overplaying increases injury risks. Dr. Pirozzolo concludes, **"Enjoy the game, but be mindful of your body's limits. Preventive care is always easier than recovering from an injury."**

Contact Key West Concierge Orthopedics to reach out to Dr. Jason Pirozzolo or schedule a Concierge Care without the Concierge Fee™ appointment. Check out Nonsurgicalorthopedics.com and TopOrthoDocs.com to continue your research.

- Mayo Clinic article on tennis elbow: https://www.mayoclinic.org/tennis-elbow
- American Physical Therapy Association resources: https://www.apta.org/
- National Weather Service's heat safety tips: https://www.weather.gov/safety/heat
- Check out the video here