

Live Well,
Work Well



Everything You Should Know About Pickleball

Pickleball is America's fastest-growing sport. According to the trade group Sports & Fitness Industry Association, the number of pickleball players grew 159% over three years. The 2023 APP Pickleball Participation Report found that there are 36.5 million pickleball players in the United States, which is 14% of the adult population, and this number is likely to grow.

Pickleball has become extremely popular in a short period, and for good reason. It's cheap, accessible, easy to play, has thriving local social scenes and doesn't require the high levels of physical fitness to get started that some sports have. However, there are reasons why you should be cautious about starting pickleball, such as high rates of player injuries. While pickleball is an appealing option for those hoping to pick up a sport, its intensity should not be underestimated, as it carries risks as other sports do. This article provides an overview of the popular new sport, highlights the benefits and explains the risks.

What Is Pickleball?

You've likely heard of pickleball, but you might be confused about how it's played. Invented in 1965, pickleball is a cross between ping-pong, tennis and badminton. Some players say playing pickleball feels like playing ping-pong while standing on the table. One of the primary reasons pickleball has become so popular is because you don't need much equipment to play. You can play singles or doubles, and all you need is a ball, a paddle and a pair of sneakers.

Pickleball is played on a court that's 20 feet by 44 feet, with a net that's 34 inches high at the center and 36 inches high at the posts. The game is usually played doubles, but can also be played one-on-one or singles if you have just one partner to play with. Similar to other racquet sports, every game begins with a serve, and you can hit the ball out of the air or after a ground bounce. You can only score a point when your team serves. Games are played to 11, although you must win by two points. Therefore, if it's 10-10, you'll play past 11 until one team is two points ahead. For a complete list of the official rules, visit <https://usapickleball.org/what-is-pickleball/official-rules/>.

Benefits of Pickleball

Pickleball is a great cardio workout. It's even been added as a workout option on many fitness trackers, watches and apps. According to USA Pickleball, players can burn between 600 and 1,000 calories in a one- to two-hour playing session. Playing pickleball can also help you meet recommended exercise guidelines, which can be difficult to do. This can help you manage or lose weight, improve lung function, lower blood pressure and improve cardiovascular health.

As with other sports, the exercise you get playing pickleball can reduce stress, improve mental health and boost activity levels, especially among older adults. Reacting quickly while on the pickleball court can also boost memory recall and cognitive function. Furthermore, pickleball is a relatively low-impact sport, which means it doesn't put a lot of stress on your muscles and joints, which makes it a suitable sport for people of all ages and activity levels.

Risks of Pickleball

One of the great things about pickleball is that it can be played by people of all ages. That means you can play with your kids, friends or grandparents. Unfortunately, low barriers to entry also increase the risk of injury. A recent study by financial services firm UBS estimated that pickleball injuries could cost Americans \$500 million in 2023 alone. According to the UBS report, common pickleball injuries include the following:

- Ankle sprains
- Calf and hamstring strains
- Fractures

Engaging in any physical activity comes with risks. To prevent injuries on the pickleball court, it's important that you warm up, start gradually, stretch and ensure you have the right-fitting equipment, especially regarding your footwear.

Unfortunately, pickleball may not be for everyone. Consult your health care provider before beginning new sports, such as pickleball, and for further guidance on how to reduce the risk of injury while playing. Even if pickleball isn't right for you, your primary care physician may be able to recommend a physical activity routine for you.

Where Is Pickleball Played?

There are more pickleball courts being built every month at local parks, indoor clubs, community centers and other locations. Pickleball is a year-round sport that can be played both indoors and outdoors. In fact, many gyms can be converted into pickleball courts. According to USA Pickleball, there are over 10,000 pickleball courts in the country, and the number keeps growing. You can find courts near you by visiting <https://www.places2play.org/> and entering your location.

Learn More

Pickleball is a social sport that can help you connect with your community. You can find local pickleball matches online or with the USA Pickleball resource: <https://www.places2play.org/>. You may also want to review the USA Pickleball's Basics – Tips for Beginners to get started.

Contact your primary care physician before starting any new sport or physical activity.

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