

# PICKLEBALL WITHOUT PAIN:

Your Go-To Guide for Injury-Free Play



# Pickleball is booming — and for good reason!

It's fun, fast-paced, and a great way to stay active at any age.

But with more people picking up paddles, we're also seeing more injuries on the court.

**The good news? Most pickleball injuries are preventable.**

By learning what to watch out for and how to protect your body, you can stay in the game and out of the clinic.

So what are the most common pickleball injuries?

Here are the top three that tend to pop up:

**1) Tennis Elbow (a.k.a. Pickleball Elbow)**

**2) Ankle Sprains**

**3) Achilles Tendon Issues**

Let's dive into what each of these injuries really means — and how you can play smart to stay injury-free.



# 1. Tennis Elbow (or Pickleball Elbow)

That annoying ache on the outside of your elbow? It's often due to overusing your forearm muscles — especially during all those repetitive paddle swings.

## Here's how to keep your elbows happy:

- ✓ **Dial in your technique:** Make sure your grip and swing are on point. Poor form = more strain.
- ✓ **Check your gear:** A paddle that's too heavy or has the wrong grip size can put extra stress on your elbow.

## A few great exercises to get ahead of it:

- 1 **Wrist extensor stretch:** Arm out, palm down, gently pull your fingers back. Hold for 15–30 seconds.
- 2 **Eccentric wrist extensions:** Slowly lower a light dumbbell with your wrist, then use your other hand to help lift it back up.
- 3 **Pronation/supination drill:** Use a hammer or similar object and slowly rotate your forearm side to side.

## Feeling some tightness or pain? Try this:

- ✓ **Take a break when needed.** Overdoing it too soon can lead to a flare-up.
- ✓ **Ice the area** for 15–20 minutes to calm inflammation.
- ✓ **Strengthen regularly:** A few sessions a week of forearm and grip exercises can go a long way.

# 2. Ankle Sprains

Pickleball involves quick side-to-side movements — which are great for your cardio, but not so great for your ankles if you're not prepared.

## Protect those ankles with:

- ✓ **Proper footwear:** Court shoes with solid lateral support are your best friend.
- ✓ **A solid warm-up:** Dynamic stretches and movement drills help prep your joints for action.

## Add these to your routine:

- 1 **Ankle circles:** Loosen things up with slow, controlled circles in both directions.
- 2 **Banded ankle work:** Use a resistance band to work your ankle stability muscles.
- 3 **Single-leg balance drills:** Stand on one foot while brushing your teeth. Bonus points for doing it on an unstable surface.

## Rolled an ankle? Don't panic:

- ✓ **Follow the PEACE & LOVE protocol (yep, that's a real thing!) —** Protection, Elevation, Avoid anti-inflammatory meds, Compression, Education & Load, Optimism, Vascularization, and Exercise.
- ✓ Once you've rehabbed, a **stability brace** can help prevent re-injury and get you confidently back on the court.

# 3. Achilles Tendinopathy

Your Achilles tendon does a lot of work during push-offs, pivots, and jumps. Too much too fast? It can get cranky.

## Avoid flare-ups with:

- ✓ **Gradual increases in play:** Don't go from zero to four games a day overnight.
- ✓ **Strong calves = happy tendons.** Calf strengthening helps share the load.
- ✓ **Keep those ankles mobile.** It reduces strain on the Achilles.

## Try these moves:

- 1 **Eccentric heel drops:** Stand on a step and slowly lower your heels below the edge.
- 2 **Toe walks:** Simple but effective for building calf strength.
- 3 **Classic calf stretch:** One foot back, heel down, and lean forward.

## If things start to feel tight or sore:

- ✓ Cut back on aggravating activities.
- ✓ **Orthotics or heel lifts** in your shoes can help take pressure off the tendon and keep you moving comfortably.

# Play smart. Stay strong. Keep swinging!

Pickleball should feel fun — not frustrating. With the right warm-ups, smart movement strategies, and recovery habits, you can reduce your risk of injury and keep doing what you love.

## Need a little extra support?

Our team of physiotherapists, chiropractors, and massage therapists can help you stay on top of your game with personalized care that's tailored to you.

## Two Convenient Locations:

### Main Clinic

421 St. Clair Street  
Chatham, ON

### South Chatham

40 Beatty Street  
Chatham, ON

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