

# DON'T PLACE YOURSELF IN A PICKLE—WARM-UP BEFORE PICKLEBALL



## GUEST CORNER

LIZE LUBBE

Have you heard of Pickleball? Think of a slower moving, underhand-only version of Tennis that is played on a compact court. Pickleball is the fastest growing active sport in America for the third year running! There are now 36.5 million Americans who play Pickleball, and while originally invented as a game for kids, a third of Pickleball's core players are now over the age of 65.

### THE PHYSICAL STRAINS THAT PLAYING PICKLEBALL IMPOSE ON OUR BODIES

While less intense than Tennis, Pickleball is still a fast-paced game that requires quick reactions such as pivots, lunges, twists, and rotations. Because Pickleball serves are all underhand, your shoulders and upper body are less prone to overuse injuries compared to tennis and other racquet ball sports. However, underhand serves heighten the likelihood for strains and injuries to the back and lower body, so staying on top of warm-up exercises is key in preparation, practice, and play.

### EXERCISES TO PREVENT PICKLEBALL RELATED INJURIES

Most players jump onto a pickleball court and start playing without any warm-up exercises. With such a substantial portion of pickleball players over the age of 40 and even 65, our bodies are less flexible, strong, and agile and thus more susceptible to overuse injuries. Acute injuries usually happen during a stumble or a fall as you back-pedal for an overhead ball. You can reduce the risk of acute injuries by adding balance, agility, and proprioception exercises to your daily workout routine.

Let's get you ready to join the mainstream of pickleball players:

#### 1. Make time to warm-up:

a) Blood circulation: 5 minutes of fast-paced walking, swinging your arms and shoulders, bringing your knees high up to your chest.

b) Stretches:

i. Hold onto a sturdy fence/wall, lunge forward with one leg with toes pointing straight forward, keep your back knee straight into a calf stretch. Hold for 10 seconds. Thereafter, lunge back by bending your back knee and keeping your front knee straight.

Pull your front foot back and from your waist lean forward with your torso into a hamstring stretch. Hold for 10 seconds. Alternate the calf and hamstring stretches 5 times

ii. Stand with your legs open wide. Lean to the one side and bend the knee until you feel the stretch in the opposite inner thigh. Hold for 10 seconds. Then bend to the other side. Repeat 5 times. Repeat but when you lean to the one side, raise the opposite arm overhead and rotate slightly across forward to add a lower back-torso stretch.

iii. Roll your wrist around in circles. stretch your fingers wide open and then into a fist as you stretch your neck from side to side.

2. **Cool down after a game of pickleball:** repeat the same gentle stretches you performed for the warm-up.

3. **Regular strengthening exercise routine to protect your back and knees:**

a) Lie on your back, tighten your core, and slowly raise your buttock up in the air into a bridge (by lifting from your coccyx slowly up as you squeeze your Glutes and rolling up to your lower back). Hold for 10 seconds.

b) Lie on your back with one knee bent and foot flat. Tighten your core muscles and lift your straight leg straight up in the air with foot flexed back. Lower your raised leg. Lift the same leg up with your leg and foot turned out. Lower your leg. Lift the same leg and turn your foot and leg inwards. Repeat the 3-directional leg raises 10 times.

4. **Balance, proprioception, and agility training:**

a) Imagine you are standing in the middle of a clock. Stand upright with your weight on the balls of your feet, knees slightly bent.

b) Place your left foot on the imaginary "9 o'clock" and right foot on "3 o'clock". Transfer your weight in a fast-paced movement from one foot to the other as if you are dancing or jogging in place. Now move your right leg slowly forward to the "12 o'clock" position and your left leg to the "6 o'clock" position. Next, reverse the right leg to the "6 o'clock" and the left leg to "12 o'clock" positions. Repeat going counterclockwise.

c) If you can, repeat the above two clockwise and counterclockwise movements but with your eyes closed. Closing your eyes will add proprioception – the mind body awareness in space without the use of your eyes for balance.

Besides the above exercise, ensure you wear the proper shoes: pickleball is mostly played on an Asphalt surface, which is a difficult surface for the body. Wear sport shoes that provide adequate side-to-side support and court traction to prevent ankle and foot injuries and falls.

Enjoy playing pickleball, and adequately prepare for your games to minimize injuries. If you experience any pain or discomfort, please contact your health care provider or physical therapist.

\*See <https://www.thedinkpickleball.com/app-participation-report-2023/>

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).



## We are hands on PTs!

The professional services of the team at

## Lize Lubbe Physical Therapy

include:

- Pre & Post Surgery Rehabilitation
- Sports Injury Rehabilitation
- Neurological Rehabilitation
- Treatment of Musculoskeletal & Orthopedic Conditions
- Postural, Balance & Gait Training
- Pain & Headache Management
- Body Rebalancing through Diaphragm, Breathing & Pelvic Stability



892 NY-35, Cross River, NY 10518 (blue office building)



914.875.9430



[www.lizelubbept.com](http://www.lizelubbept.com)



[contact@lizelubbept.com](mailto:contact@lizelubbept.com)

