

## America's Fastest Growing Sport Pickleball and Its Injury Conditions

Pickleball, combining elements of tennis, badminton, and ping-pong, has exploded in popularity across the United States as the game has captured the nation's attention. As of 2024, 48.3 million adult Americans have played pickleball at least once in the past 12 months<sup>1</sup>.

The sport's appeal lies in its accessibility and simplicity. The court is significantly smaller than a tennis court, measuring 20 feet wide by 44 feet deep compared to a tennis court's 36 feet wide and 78 feet deep, and the net is set two inches lower at the center. These differences make it easier for people of all ages and skill levels to play.



However, the rapid growth of pickleball has raised concerns about potential injuries. Dr. Chudik, an orthopaedic surgeon and sports medicine specialist, notes that while pickleball assumed to have similar injuries to other racquet sports, researchers have found some differences.

Dr. Chudik emphasizes that anyone experiencing pain, swelling, or loss of movement should seek prompt medical evaluation. He explains that while some injuries in pickleball and tennis can be similar, there are notable differences. For instance, pickleball is played more underhand than tennis, making shoulder injuries less common than falls on an outstretched hand or arm.

Common pickleball injuries include:

- Ankle sprains
- Calf strains
- Achilles tendon ruptures
- Wrist and finger fractures
- Acute knee injuries involving the meniscus and ligaments
- Hamstring, quadriceps, hip flexor adductor, and calf muscle strains

“Treatment for these injuries can range from rest, icing, compression, and elevation (RICE) to non-weight bearing, bracing, physical therapy, or possibly surgery, depending on the severity.”, Dr. Chudik stated.

Based on his 20+ years of treating athletes of all abilities and ages, Dr. Chudik recommends thorough warm-up before playing, including upper body and lower body exercises. As pickleball continues to grow in popularity, it's crucial for players to be aware of potential injuries and take necessary precautions to enjoy the game safely.

References:<sup>1</sup> (2024) New APP Research Reveals Nearly 50 Million Adult Americans Have Played Pickleball. The APP Global.