



Staying fit for tennis

Part 1 Strength

Three simple exercises to keep you fit for tennis:

Playing tennis helps to keep us fit. However, as we age the strength in our muscles naturally declines and the best way to stop this is by doing strengthening exercises, also called resisted exercises.

As a physiotherapist I know that the simpler and easier the exercise, the more likely it will get done.

So I have put together three easy exercises that will help to maintain the strength in your leg muscles. You do the exercises by slightly changing three everyday activities you already do at home. They are designed to use your body weight as resistance so no special equipment needed.

Stronger leg muscles allow you to move faster, improve your performance and help prevent injury.

Exercise 1: Whenever you go up a flight of stairs, take the steps two at a time. You may have to hold onto the bannister for balance at first, but the more you do the stronger and more balanced you will become.

Exercise 2: When you stand up from a chair, do not push up with your arms, only use your legs to stand up. Try to do this 3 times (or more!) each time you stand up.

Exercise 3: Whenever you are standing (e.g. at the sink washing up), with knees straight lift your heels up off the ground, then lower back down. This will strengthen your calf muscles.

Small changes to your everyday activities can make a huge difference to the strength in your legs. You can benefit from these exercises whatever your age and it is never too late to start.

Keep exercising to keep playing.

For more information go to www.fitterforever.org

Suzanne Clark Chartered Physiotherapist and author of Play Tennis Forever
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NB: If you have any existing medical conditions or require individual advice, then you should check with your GP or appropriate healthcare professional before undertaking any exercise or stretching programmes. © Fitter Forever Ltd 2014

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Part 2 Flexibility

Three simple exercises to keep you flexible for tennis:

As we age, our joints can become stiffer and our muscles less flexible. This causes loss of movement in our joints, can result in arthritic changes and predisposes the tennis player to injury.

As a physiotherapist I know that the simpler and easier the exercise, the more likely it will get done.

So I have put together three easy stretching exercises that will help you to maintain the flexibility in your leg muscles. The exercises are simple and are best done straight after you finish playing tennis or exercising when your muscles are still warm. Stretching cold muscles can cause injury.

More flexible muscles will help you move better on court, help prevent injury and help prevent arthritic changes in your joints.

Stretch 1: Hamstrings stretch. Sitting on a chair, put your right leg straight out in front of you, heel on the ground. Keeping your knee straight, gently slide your right hand down your leg until you feel tension in your hamstrings on the back of your leg. Hold for 30 seconds and then relax. Repeat three times for each leg.

Exercise 2: Quads stretch. Sit near the edge of the chair seat so that your leg can move back along the side of the chair. Hold onto your ankle and gently pull your ankle up and back, bending your knee, until you feel the tension in your quadriceps muscles on the front of your thigh. Hold for 30 seconds then relax. Repeat three times each leg.

Exercise 3: Calf stretch. Stand with your arms straight against a wall and put your left foot forwards knee bent. Keep your right leg back with your heel on the ground and knee straight. Lean forwards against the wall until you feel the tension in your right calf muscle. Hold for 30 seconds and then relax. Repeat three times for each leg.

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Part 3 Balance

Three simple balance exercises to keep you fit for tennis:

Balance is the foundation to movement and is vital for good sporting performance. However, as we age our balance gradually deteriorates making some tasks more difficult, like balancing on one leg to put your socks on. This is a natural decline but it can also be related to existing conditions or medication. Simple balance exercises can make a huge difference to maintaining your balance.

Better balance allows you to move faster, improve your performance and help prevent injury.

As a physiotherapist I know that the simpler and easier the exercise, the more likely it will get done.

So I have put together three easy balance exercises that will help to maintain your balance. The exercises are simple, can be done at home and no equipment is needed.

Exercise 1: When brushing your teeth, try to get into the habit of balancing on one leg and then the other. You may have to hold on at first but gradually your balance should improve and you won't have to.

Exercise 2: See how long you can balance on one leg first with your eyes open and then with them closed. It is really hard to do it with them closed, but if you can improve the length of time you can do it, you will know that you really are improving your balance.

Exercise 3: Stand near to a wall in case you need to touch it for balance. Stand straight and try to walk by placing your right heel on the floor directly in front of your left toes (heel toe walking). Then do the same by placing your left heel directly in front of your right toes. Try to continue walking like this for 5 steps. With time, as your balance improves, you should be able to walk further.

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