

Returning to the Tennis Court After a Lazy Winter



As the weather turns warmer, many of us jump right back into our favorite outdoor sports without any preparation, setting ourselves up for injury and frustration. Tennis is a physically demanding sport, so it is a great idea to **ease into a new season with a sensible, sport-specific fitness plan.**

Tennis requires cardiovascular endurance, overall muscle strength and flexibility in specific areas of the body, so you will need a program that covers all of these aspects.

- Give yourself about 4 to 6 weeks of **stretching, strengthening and cardiovascular training** before jumping back onto the court. Ease back into it with 30 minutes of low-impact activity (stationary bike, elliptical machine, treadmill) 3 to 4 times a week.
- Once you have built up some stamina, try **interval training**. Tennis involves short bursts of intense activity, followed by short recovery times. Try walking for a few minutes, then jogging and then walking again; or, in the gym, spend 30 seconds peddling rapidly on the bike, then 90 seconds at a slower pace. Continue this pattern for 20 to 30 minutes.
- **Strength training** is important, too. Use lighter weights and more repetitions to avoid strain. Focus on strengthening the areas needed for your game—the chest, back and shoulders (rowing machines, shoulder presses), thighs (squats) and, especially, the abdominal muscles (sit-ups, twists).
- Rotator cuff injuries and tennis elbow can put a major damper on your tennis season. You can avoid these injuries by engaging in **pronation and supination exercises** for the wrist and forearm. Ask us about exercises that stretch the shoulders and prevent tennis elbow.
- Finally, before playing competitively, **hit the courts casually**. Start off by just volleying; progress into friendly matches over a few weeks' time.

Jump back in without preparation, and you run the risk of overdoing it and having to sit out an entire season. It is far better to talk with us about designing a program to help you get back into the “swing” of things!