



Care at its Best!
www.performanceptri.com



Got Back Pain?

Have you ever suffered from back pain during the tennis season?

Back pain is a common complaint for tennis players for a number of reasons, including:

- There is a large amount of trunk rotation and twisting required in the spine when playing tennis.
- When serving, the low back extends adding an extra strain to the lower back.
- Back muscles can become over-worked and strained due to the continual sudden forward and sideways movements and start-and-stop motions during a game of tennis.
- Unless involved in a specific strength and conditioning program to prepare the body for the movements of tennis, the ligaments, muscles, and discs may be injured, resulting in low back pain.

Preventing Back Pain

The best option for treating back pain is to do all you can to prevent it. This is especially important if you have had back pain in the past, as once you have suffered from back pain you are predisposed for recurrence. Consider all of these points in your quest to prevent back pain interfering with your tennis game:

- Be fitted by a professional for a tennis racquet that's best for you. A more flexible tennis racquet requires more trunk rotation than a stiffer racquet with looser strings.
- Periodically have a tennis professional check your form, especially if you are new to the game. Proper form will help you avoid added stress on your back. If you have a history of back pain you should consider using the slice serve rather than a kick serve to reduce the degree of back extension.
- Participate in a regular conditioning program that includes cardio-vascular exercise (such as swimming, biking, walking or running), stretching to maintain flexibility and strengthening.
- Avoid other risk factors for back pain. These include maintaining a healthy weight, avoid smoking, avoid slouching and other poor posture habits and always lift with your legs, avoid twisting motions of the spine.
- Finally, strengthen the core!

Strengthening the Core

Recently the focus on strengthening the core has gained much popularity, whether for the professional athlete, weekend warrior or sedentary person wanting to stay in shape or treat and prevent low back pain. The reason for this is that recent studies have demonstrated the role of the deep abdominal muscles in providing support for the low back. The deepest muscle is called the transverse abdominis. This muscle acts like a corset for the low back, providing support and stability to the structures of the spine. Without the support of this muscle, there is added torsion and stresses to the spine, increasing the risk of injury and pain. This is especially true for anyone who has suffered from low back pain in the past. Studies have found that during episodes of back pain the transverse abdominis muscle stops contracting and unless the person specifically

exercises and trains this muscle, it fails to return to its role in providing stability to the low back. This is one reason many of us have repeated episodes of back pain.

There are a variety of ways to strengthen the core and a number of exercise programs will specifically train these muscles. One of the most important ways to increase your awareness of these muscles so you can begin using them for all sports, recreational activities and activities of daily living, is to simply learn how to hold your lower abdominals in. This can be done by trying to draw your navel in towards the spine, and continuing to breath. This can take some practice! This exercise can be done in any position (lying, sitting, stranding) and as you become more aware of how to contract these muscles, then you can do it when walking, bending and lifting. Finally, when playing tennis, begin by drawing the lower abdominals in intermittently during a game and progress to holding these muscles in all of the time. You may actually find that your game improves, as the added stability, strength and control of you trunk promotes improved strength and control of your arms and legs. In addition, try the following exercises.

So, go ahead, strengthen to core, prevent back pain and improve your game!

Exercises for the Core

1. Abdominal Stabilization

Lie on your back with knees bent.
Draw your navel in towards your spine, without pelvic tilting.
Lift right leg table and straighten leg (as shown).
Return leg to starting position & repeat with other leg.
Place your hands on your pelvis to ensure the pelvis does not move. Continue to breath throughout the exercise.
Repeat 10 times with each leg.



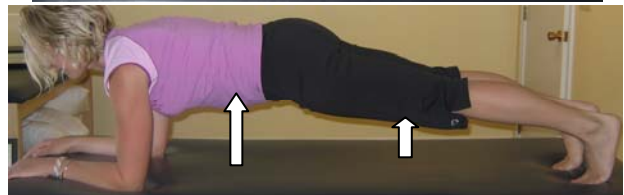
2. Bridging

Lie on your back with knees bent and feet shoulder width apart. Lift hips up.
Hold this position for 10 seconds and continue to breath.
Repeat 10 seconds.



3. The Plank

Lie on stomach resting on forearms, low back relaxed and toes tucked under.
Draw navel in and upward toward the spine.
Lift hips and knees off table/mat as shown.
Hold for 10 seconds, Repeat 10 times.



The information on this page is provided to you from Performance Physical Therapy. It is not intended to replace any information/treatment provided to you by your health care provider. If you experience any pain while participating in this exercise, please contact your health care provider. Please feel free to check with your Physical Therapist if you have any questions about the information provided on this page.

We are here to help you reach your Peak Performance!

Ph: 401-726-7100 or 401-435-4540

6 Convenient Rhode Island Locations

Check us out online at: www.performanceptri.com