

Staying fit for tennis

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. 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.

Keep stretching to keep playing.

For more information go to www.fitterforever.org

Suzanne Clark Chartered Physiotherapist and author of Play Tennis Forever
www.playtennisforever.co.uk

