

## HEALTH BENEFITS OF TENNIS

### TALKING POINTS

#### GENERAL HEALTH BENEFITS

##### **1. Tennis is a lifetime sport.**

Players enjoy the social, emotional, and physical benefits of tennis long after they can play other adult sports. In effect, tennis becomes an enjoyable lifetime fitness regime.

##### **2. Tennis is a key to good health and longevity.**

Scientists have known for years that playing tennis on a regular basis is an excellent way of staying healthy, maintaining fitness, and increasing longevity. Recent studies have shown that its health and fitness benefits are even greater than we expected.

##### **3. Tennis improves cardiovascular health and increases longevity.**

The Cleveland Clinic calls tennis “an ideal sport for a healthy heart.” A nine-year study of British adults reported that risk of death from all sources was 47% lower for racquet sports players. A Mayo clinic study found that regular players live 9.7 years longer than average Americans and significantly longer than adults who engage in any other popular sport.

##### **4. Tennis contributes to emotional health.**

Numerous studies document the links between physical and emotional health. Tennis involves teams or a network of friends who enjoy being together. It teaches sportsmanship and teamwork and builds lifetime friendships that extend far beyond the courts. Players learn to cope with stress, to think strategically, and to problem-solve on the fly, important skills in today’s world.

##### **5. Tennis builds overall fitness.**

Tennis contributes greatly to overall fitness. An hour of singles can burn 580-870 calories, and an hour of doubles around 500. Regular play lowers

body fat, improves blood cholesterol levels, and reduces the risk of diabetes. Tennis players tend to have increased bone density and stronger, more flexible muscles, tendons and ligaments than their less active contemporaries. Numerous studies have demonstrated that tennis improves agility, balance, coordination, including hand-eye coordination, and reduces reaction times. In addition, its conditioning effects improve overall health and strengthen the immune system.

**6. Tennis is a great cross-training sport.**

With its mix of aerobic and anaerobic exercise, and the natural interval training produced by the pace of play, tennis produces physical gains essential to any active sport. Increased agility, balance, coordination, quickness, and endurance improve general athletic performance.

## **YOUTH HEALTH BENEFITS**

**1. Tennis improves health and fitness.**

Most children have the gross and fine motor skills to begin learning tennis by the time they are five years old, and some can start even earlier. There is plenty of evidence that children and adolescents who play tennis realize the same health and fitness benefits as adults, including better cardiovascular conditioning, greater endurance, more strength, and increased flexibility, balance and agility. Several studies suggest that there is a “dose” relationship between tennis and fitness: the earlier people start playing, the frequency of play and longer they continue playing, the greater the greater the fitness gains.

**2. Tennis meets physical need.**

Contemporary tennis instruction techniques are designed to make tennis fun and rewarding for children and youth of all ages. We use positive reinforcement, age-appropriate courts and equipment, and a mixture of cooperative and competitive drills and games. Instructors work to meet each child at their stage of physical development, gradually introducing new skills as they mature. This approach reinforces and accelerates physical development in an enjoyable way that makes kids want to continue playing.

**3. Tennis develops psychological strengths and social skills.**

Young players also tend to build psychological strengths and life management skills that contribute to overall health, including the enjoyment of regular physical exercise. They generally rate very high in responsibility, self-discipline, self-control and stress management, and below average in anxiety. In addition, studies have placed them well ahead of their non-playing peers in spontaneity, sociability, mental focus, competitiveness, and risk-seeking. Conversely, behavioral analyses have shown that kids who play tennis are less likely to engage in harmful behaviors like smoking, drinking and drug use.

**4. Tennis players tend to do better academically than non-players.**

It is well known that academic success is statistically linked to overall health and fitness. This academic multiplier effect seems to be independent, at least to an extent, of socio-economic status, as indicated by outcomes from National Junior Tennis and Learning Network chapters across the nation.

**5. Tennis provides year-round physical activity.**

The United States Tennis Association recommends that young people stay active year-round and avoid early specialization, participating in a variety of sports. Since tennis emphasizes movement and coordination, it is a perfect additional sport for young athletes.

**6. Tennis often becomes a family sport.**

Tennis can strengthen bonds between family members and offering wholesome multigenerational recreation for everyone. It is exactly the type of shared activity psychologists recommend for family relationship-building.

## OLDER ADULT HEALTH BENEFITS

### **1. Tennis helps older adults stay healthy and fit.**

Older adults who play tennis regularly are demonstrably healthier and fitter, both physically and mentally, than sedentary adults in their age cohorts.

Older adults who play tennis are also likely to live longer with fewer major physical problems. This is generally attributed to the combination of regular exercise and frequent social interactions with tennis-playing friends, and the more frequently seniors play the more likely they are to remain physically and mentally fit.

### **2. Tennis can help slow age-related physical decline.**

A comparative advantage of being healthy and fit is to slow the age-related rate of decline in heart-lung efficiency and improve blood cholesterol profiles. Because tennis players tend to live longer than people who participate in other active sports, we can assume that these factors are pronounced in individuals who continue to play into their advanced years. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that there will be appreciable gains for older players, whether they are lifetime athletes or late starters.

## SPECIAL POPULATION HEALTH BENEFITS

### **The health benefits of tennis are available to everyone.**

There are tennis programs available for individuals who have a variety of cognitive, intellectual, learning, and physical disabilities, including people with Autism, those with impaired vision and hearing, and wheelchair users. These programs use modified rules and equipment to make learning and playing tennis fun for people who often have difficulty participating in organized sports or getting enough physical exercise.

## SOURCES

The information above is based on the United States Tennis Association (USTA) and following studies and reports:

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Schnohr, Peter, *et al.* 2018. Various Leisure-Time Physical Activities Associated with Widely Divergent Life Expectancies: The Copenhagen City Heart Study. *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* 93(12): 1775-1785.

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