



Study smart: New research shows exercising after studying helps retain nearly twice as much information the next day



Bacon risk: A study in *Neurology* says people who eat processed red meat have a 13% higher risk of developing dementia

ASK THE SEXPERT

Dr Tanaya Narendra, aka Dr Cuterus, is an Oxford-trained doctor, bestselling author and one of the country's most trusted voices on sexual and reproductive health

1 I am a 26-year-old woman. My partner removed the condom without my consent. He said it is no big deal, but I feel very angry. He says if I am only with him, and he is only with me, why do I care? How can I explain how wrong this is? I just feel so mad at him.
THIS IS A RED FLAG! I'm so sorry you've been violated in this way. What he did is called stealthing, and it's a violation of consent. You get to choose what happens with your body, and how you have sex. Be clear with him and tell him that stealthing is considered rape in some countries. You're not wrong for being angry.

2 I am a 32-year-old woman. I think I may be polyamorous. My husband says one love or none. Is there any middle ground or do I choose? You're not just having a kink mismatch; you may be having a mismatch in the very core values of who you two are. Instead of convincing yourself, dig deep: are you poly because your current relationship lacks intimacy, or because your heart genuinely orients to multiple loves as its default mode? The middle ground isn't "convince each other" but honesty, therapy, and perhaps even understanding what commitment means to you both. There is no villain here.

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Court sense

Dr Karishma Sanghavi, sports physiotherapist, lays out how to enjoy pickleball and padel without injury — what to do, what to avoid and the simple habits that keep you pain-free

Pickleball and padel may look like relaxed racquet games, but their mix of fast rallies, lunges, overhead shots and quick stops makes them surprisingly tough on the body. Without good preparation, players risk sore knees, sprained ankles, elbow pain or tight shoulders. The best safeguard is to act like an athlete: warm up, build strength, and use the right gear so you stay injury-free and keep improving. Begin every session with five-10 minutes of movement: brisk walk round the court, side shuffles, hip swings, arm circles. Afterwards stretch calves, quads, hamstrings, glutes and forearms, and roll out any tight spots. Warm muscles cope better with quick accelerations and sudden brakes.

Posture and footwork

Many strains happen because people reach awkwardly or drop into an uncontrolled lunge. Start each point from an athletic stance — knees soft, weight forward, paddle ready. Take light, quick steps rather than a huge dive. If you do lunge, keep the shin vertical, heel down, knee over the toes, and push off through the whole foot.

Keep swings compact: avoid heavy wrist flicks in pickleball, and meet lobs calmly at shoulder height in padel instead of chasing a wild smash. Use your legs and trunk for power so elbows, shoulders and back stay protected.

Build strength and mobility

Two short off-court sessions a week are enough:

- Squats, split-squats and step-downs for leg strength.
- Single-leg balance drills for ankle stability.
- Shoulder work — band rotations, wall slides, light ball throws.



The Split Lunge on BOSU with Dumbbell Press strengthens legs for lunging and low-ball reaches

- Core and rotation work — Pallof presses, chops.
- Stretches for calves, hips and mid-back to keep motion smooth.
- Padel players, whose rallies last longer, also benefit from gentle cardio such as walking or cycling to build stamina without pounding joints.

Remember: The body dislikes sudden spikes in effort. If you usually play once a week, don't jump to four. Build up slowly, keep at least one rest day, and ease off if soreness lasts longer than a day or two. Tendons and ligaments need time to adapt.

Shoes: Your safety net

Footwear is often overlooked but vital. Running trainers lack side-to-side support, which is why ankles roll or knees ache. Court shoes have firm sides and a flat, wide base so you can brake and push off without wobbling.

- Outdoor courts (concrete or asphalt): Look for a tough rubber outsole with a clear tread pattern, good grip and extra cushioning inside the midsole. That padding softens landings and protects hips and knees from repeated impact.
- Indoor floors (wood or synthetic):

Choose non-marking soles — these are pale rubber bottoms that won't scuff polished floors. They're also slightly tacky, giving traction when you sprint or stop. A light upper made from mesh or breathable fabric stops your feet overheating in long games.

Check your shoes often: if the sole is bald or the midsole feels flat, the shoe needs replacing.

Understanding the games

Pickleball uses a solid paddle and a perforated plastic ball on a compact court, demanding sharp reactions, neat footwork and controlled volleys. Common mistakes include overreaching at the net or twisting too far for wide balls, which strain the forearm and knee.

Padel is doubles on an enclosed glass court. Players hit a low-compression tennis ball with a stringless bat and can use the walls after the bounce. Rallies are longer and involve more overheads, rotations and sprints, so shoulders, hips and the lower back work harder.

Smart play helps your body as much as your score:

- In pickleball, stay light on your feet near the "kitchen" line and keep volleys soft to avoid jarring the wrist.
- In padel, learn the bandeja — a calm, controlled overhead played with the bat angled slightly down, taken at shoulder height. It's designed to return lobs safely and set up the next shot, sparing your neck and lower back from over-arching for a smash.
- Both sports reward planting your feet before hitting. Smooth, balanced strokes protect joints and improve accuracy.

The author is a sports physiotherapist and McKenzie Institute-certified MDT practitioner

Zulfikar Saif, 53, plays padel thrice a week

A GUIDE FOR PLAYERS

- Warm up for five-10 minutes, cool down after.
- Stay in control: small steps beat sudden lunges.
- Use legs and trunk for power, not only the wrist or shoulder.
- Keep strength, balance and mobility work in your weekly routine.
- Increase play gradually and rest when needed.
- Wear court shoes suited to surface, as detailed in the article. And replace shoes once support fades.

PLAYING IT SAFE

ZULFIKAR SAIF, 53, COLABA — AIR-CONDITIONING DEALER



"I'm on the padel court three or four times a week. A meniscus tear sidelined me for two months — the orthopedist told me to avoid straining the knee, focus on swimming and cycling, and add physiotherapy with red-light therapy. I'm back, but I respect my limits now."

MAZHAR GHADIALY, 55, CUFFE PARADE — WATCH ENTREPRENEUR



"I play pickleball thrice a week. A nagging pain turned out to be a wrist-muscle sprain from gripping the paddle too tightly. Physiotherapy, stretching and strength work helped, and I lice it when sore. Warming up properly is non-negotiable now."