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Getting Into the Swing for Tennis Season



Anyone for tennis? If winter has you longing for court time, you can pump up your enthusiasm—and reduce your chances of injury—by starting a **fitness program** before you touch a racquet. And it is not just about your swing.

Effective preseason preparation includes a foundation of aerobic conditioning, strength training and skill drills. By increasing the intensity of your workouts over time, you

will progress to **higher-impact conditioning** gradually while avoiding serious injury.

One approach, called “periodization,” involves a three-phase, four-week program of gradual training:

- **Preparation phase (weeks 1 and 2): low-impact aerobics and light weight training**
- **Precompetitive phase (week 3): more intense conditioning and interval training, including more emphasis on tennis-specific skills**
- **Peak phase (week 4): actual play and skill drills, with continuing low-intensity strength training focused on tennis-specific areas of the body such as rotator cuffs, forearms and body core**

Training just your upper body is not enough. Your strength training should include **trunk and legs** as well as the shoulders. Tennis gives your whole body a good workout, be sure that all your large muscle groups are fit before you start playing competitively.

After a long winter layoff, even four weeks of training may not be enough to get you to full speed every day. After building up gradually, consider **easing into the season** with one or two days of play every week for the first few weeks. Then you can begin to increase your frequency. Be sure to balance exertion with adequate rest, both passive (sleep and inactivity) and active (nontennis activities). Ask us for suggestions about **specific training activities** and strategies that will help you prepare for a successful tennis season.