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After nine years immersed in the world of orthopaedics, physical therapy, and rec-league pickleball chatter, I've learned that many injury tales start quietly — a twinge here, a weird sensation there — and then suddenly become a real problem. One story I hear all the time is about nerve symptoms like numbness and tingling. These "red flags" deserve your immediate attention rather than a shrug or a hope-and-pray self-management approach.

In this post, I'm breaking down the common pickleball injury triggers that should make you pause your game; especially when nerve symptoms arise. Plus, I'll highlight why aging tendons demand extra care and how mechanics like a tight grip can be your own worst enemy. Along the way, I'll mention some wellness friends you might like, including Joy Organics organic CBD gummies — great for calming inflammation after a game. And, photo credit goes to Brendan Sapp / Unsplash for the crisp court-side imagery that keeps me inspired.

## Why Overuse and Frequency Matter More than the "Big Hit"

One of my quirks is counting warm-up minutes aloud every time I hit the court ("One, two, three... eight!"). I [sarasotamagazine](#) do this because injuries rarely come from one dramatic event. Instead, they build over multiple sessions — microtraumas accumulating silently until you feel the burn or numbness start.

Pickleball is addictively fast-paced, and with the surge in popularity, many players dive into several sessions per week or even daily matches without pacing themselves. Tendons, nerves, and muscles can take repeated pounding, especially if you haven't properly ramped up intensity or given your body enough recovery.





## How Overuse Leads to Nerve Symptoms

- **Repetitive compression:** Playing paddle after paddle without breaks can compress nerves around your wrist, elbow, or shoulder.
- **Inflammation swelling:** Swollen tendons or muscles can press on nerves, causing numbness or tingling.
- **Microtears:** Minor tissue damage accumulates, irritating nearby nerves subtly but persistently.

These symptoms often sneak in gradually. If you ignore them, you risk escalating from a minor annoyance to a serious problem that sidelines your game.

## Aging Tendons and Nervous System — Why You Need Patience

Walking around the courts, I've watched players in their 50s, 60s, and beyond push hard with youthful enthusiasm but then pay a price. Here's the scoop from orthopaedists and PTs I've interviewed: aging tendons adapt more slowly. What was once a minor tweak now feels like a prolonged setback because tendons have reduced elasticity and slower healing capacity.

## Why This Matters for Your Game

1. **Sudden loads overwhelm:** A force or movement that your body handled fine five years ago can now cause irritation or injury.
2. **Recovery times increase:** Your body needs longer, not shorter, rest periods between sessions.
3. **Increased nerve vulnerability:** Aging also affects nerve conduction and sensitivity, meaning numbness or tingling is more than a fleeting distraction.

If you've noticed that your usual routine now triggers nerve symptoms like pins and needles or persistent numbness, please stop and seek medical evaluation. This isn't self-manage territory.

## Rotator Cuff Irritation — Night Pain and Reach Limitations

Rotator cuff problems are a pickleball classic, especially for players who insist on hard overhead smashes or have poor shoulder mechanics. Here's what you might see:

- **Night pain:** A persistent ache that wakes you or you notice when sleeping on your side is a hallmark sign of rotator cuff irritation.
- **Behind-the-back reach limits:** Struggling to comfortably reach behind your back for a towel or seatbelt indicates tendon inflammation or early tear.
- **Associated numbness:** Sometimes nerve irritation accompanies this, producing tingling down your arm.

Treating this yourself without guidance often prolongs symptoms or leads to chronic issues. Again, nerve symptoms are red flags you don't want to ignore.

## Elbow Pain – The Grip and Mechanics Culprit

Remember, it's not just the paddle but how you hold and swing it. Tight grip and arm-dominant strokes contribute heavily to elbow pain, often mistaken as "paddle problems" in clubhouse debates.

### Why Grip and Mechanics Matter

- **Tight grip increases tension:** This crushes forearm tendons and compresses nerves.
- **Arm-dominant swings overuse elbow joints:** Instead of leveraging shoulder and torso rotation, all load goes to the elbow tendons and nerves.
- **These habits foster nerve irritation:** Resulting in numbness, tingling, and progressive pain.

A solid warm-up that includes wrist rotations and a few light resistance band sets (a tip from my own paddle bag routine) can help loosen the grip muscles and reduce tension before you hit the court.

## Nerve Symptoms Red Flags – When to Stop and Seek Help

Symptom Why It Matters Recommended Action Numbness or Tingling in Fingers or Hand May signal nerve compression like carpal tunnel or cubital tunnel syndrome. Stop playing immediately; seek medical evaluation. Persistent Night Pain in Shoulder Indicates rotator cuff irritation or tear needing diagnosis. Avoid aggravating moves; consult an orthopedist or PT. Loss of Grip Strength Suggests nerve involvement or tendon injury. Cease play; get professional evaluation. Radiating Pain Down Arm Possible nerve root irritation in neck or elbow. Immediate assessment recommended; no self-treatment.

### Do Not Self-Manage Serious Nerve Symptoms

One phrase I always ask players: *"What changed in the last two weeks?"* If symptoms progress or new nerve sensations emerge, this is your body waving a red flag.

Tempting as it can be to lean on miracle-fix language or quick fixes, remember that self-managing nerve symptoms often worsens the problem. These issues demand professional evaluation. Physical therapy, medical imaging, or even referral to a specialist might be necessary steps to return you safely to your favorite sport.

## Supplementing Recovery — The Joy Organics Touch

While we're on recovery, some players turn to natural options to soften inflammation. Joy Organics has gained a solid reputation for their organic CBD gummies, which many pickleballers find helpful for calming post-game soreness and discomfort.

Combining traditional rehab with wellness products like these is a growing trend — but remember, supplements should complement, not replace, professional treatment. And if you do include CBD in your routine, opt for

trusted brands like Joy Organics to ensure quality and safety.

## Final Serve: Play Smart, Listen Close

In summary, pickleball injuries are less about a single dramatic moment and more about the total load we place on our bodies over time. Numbness or tingling are not signs to power through — they're a signal to hit pause.

Respect your aging tendons, refine your mechanics, and don't be shy about seeking medical evaluation when nerve symptoms show up. Your future self on the court will thank you.

*Photo credit: Brendan Sapp / Unsplash*

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