

# Anyone for TENNIS?

Whether you're an aspiring Sharapova or you haven't picked up a racquet since school, *Top Santé* has the information and inspiration you need to score an ace this summer.

Is there anything more summery than the scent of strawberries and Pimm's on the breeze, the 'pop' of ball hitting racquet, and the gentle applause of a tennis crowd? Why, it's enough to make you head off for a quick rally yourself. And at this time of year, you won't be alone.

Wimbledon inspires us to get fit like no other sporting event. 'There's a marked increase in bookings and park courts are full from dawn till dusk during the period,' says David Lloyd tennis coach Carl Jansen. 'But unfortunately interest does tail off as Murray fever subsides.' According to the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA), nearly half a million people play every week in the UK, but double that would like to. So what's keeping us off the court?

'Tennis has an elitist, expensive image,'

says Tom Harlow, development director of the LTA. 'In fact, it costs a lot less than you may think. You don't need to splurge on equipment and you don't need to join a club - although if you do, the average price in the UK is just £2.50 a week. There are many places to play tennis for free.'

And if you do, you'll reap the benefits. Tennis doesn't just make you fitter. 'People love it because it's so social,' says coach Sam Richardson. 'It's also a great activity for people who have a competitive side, or who enjoy learning and improving on new skills. Being a good player involves quick thinking and strategy, so your mind gets a workout, too.' And the opportunity to get out in the fresh air will boost your vitamin D levels, along with your mood.

So come on, it's your serve... ▶

Top  
Santé  
tip!

*'Always warm up. Even if you're playing a fairly gentle game you can easily pull a muscle and be off court for weeks'*

SOPHIE STONE, 37, A PSYCHOLOGIST FROM LONDON

# TENNIS: your expert guide

You don't need to spend a fortune to get started. From racquets to sports bras, here is the insider track on buying the essentials

## BUYING A RACQUET

**Q How do I know what racquet to buy?**

'It's advisable to visit a sports or specialist tennis shop and handle some,' says coach Sam Richardson. 'You want one that feels comfortable and not too heavy. Most important is the grip size – the circumference around the handle. When you pick up the racquet (as if you're shaking hands with it), there should be a gap about the width of your little finger between the tips of your fingers and the heel of your hand. If your fingers curl right round and touch your hand, the grip is too small and you'll hold the racquet too tightly, risking tennis elbow. If the gap is too big, the racquet is too big and will just slip around in your hand. Make a note of the grip size (which is usually a number from 2-5) for when you decide to buy.'

**Q How much should I spend?**

'An average price would be £50, about the same as you'd budget for a pair

of sports trainers,' says Richardson. 'You can get them for less and you can splurge into the hundreds, but £50 will get you a decent-quality racquet. Once you know your grip size, you'll find plenty of bargains online.' We love [www.justrackets.co.uk](http://www.justrackets.co.uk).

**Q What other kit is important?**

'All you need are a racquet and balls' says Richardson. 'Just wear whatever kit you feel comfortable in. Some clubs have an all-white clothes rule, and many request you wear shoes with non-marking soles.'

If you play often, specialist tennis shoes are good as they'll support your feet and ankles during all the side-to-side, forward-



and-back movements you'll perform during a tennis game, and they'll have less grip than normal trainers, so you can turn on court more easily.'

And, finally, don't forget your sports bra. Tennis and badminton players experience more lateral breast movement due to all that serving, lunging and rotation, so it's worth finding one that gives adequate side support while allowing freedom of arm movement.

**Top Santé tip!**

*'If you're not sure if the ball was out or in, assume it's in – it's good etiquette and you'll be rewarded for your sporting nature. Plus, if you win, you buy the drinks!'*

JULIA WHITEHEAD, 43, A BUSINESS MANAGER FROM RICHMOND

## FITNESS FACTS

- Playing tennis for an hour burns an average of 517 calories, so it's an ideal sport to incorporate into a weight-loss plan.
- Tennis is known as the lifetime sport which means you can play it at any age and still enjoy its benefits. It keeps your reaction times sharp and maintains motor skills, found scientists at the University of Illinois, US.
- It's good for your mood! According to a study at Southern Connecticut State University, US, tennis players score higher in vigour, optimism and self-esteem than other sports people and non sports people, plus they score lower in depression, anger, confusion, anxiety and tension.

**Top Santé tip!**

*"Check out [www.allplaytennis.com](http://www.allplaytennis.com) to connect with other players in your area. There's a simple quiz to determine your standard and you can find new tennis partners"*

TOM HARLOW, DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR, LTA

## WHERE TO PLAY

'You don't need to belong to a club, there are over 10,000 park courts around the UK,' says Richardson. 'Some charge a small fee, around £5-£6 an hour to play, while many are free. Lots of park sites have good facilities and training schemes. 'Even though tennis clubs often have a joining fee and may require a certain standard of play, they're rarely as costly as gyms,' he continues. 'If you're a keen, frequent player, it's worth asking a club if you can try it out before joining.' Clubs run competitive leagues that are a great way to challenge and improve your skills.'

To find your nearest tennis club, coach or park court, visit: [www.lta.org.uk](http://www.lta.org.uk), [www.tennisfoundation.org.uk](http://www.tennisfoundation.org.uk) or [www.eparktennis.com](http://www.eparktennis.com).

Tennis For Free works with schools, clubs and local authorities to provide free coaching and courts for children and families. [www.tennisforfree.com](http://www.tennisforfree.com).

## WHAT ABOUT LESSONS?

If you haven't played for years and lack the confidence to get back on court, a few lessons could be the answer. 'A coach can assess your technique and point out where you might be going wrong,' says Jansen. 'They can give you loads of tips to get more from the game and prevent injury.'

The average cost of an hour's one-to-one coaching is around £30, which is cheaper than most personal training gym sessions. 'To get the cost down further, you can get together with some friends and book a group lesson,' he suggests. 'Or many clubs and park sites will run group courses for all levels – these can work out at just a few pounds an hour. It can be less intimidating and more fun to learn in a group, and it's a good way to meet potential partners.'

## BE INSPIRED

### Body benefits

- 1 Upper body** Just holding a tennis racket for the duration of a match will tone your forearms, while serving and returning will give your shoulders, arms and upper back a solid workout. Bye-bye, bingo wings!
- 2 Heart and lungs** As tennis is a total body sport, your cardiovascular system will get a thorough workout, preventing many illnesses including high blood pressure and heart disease.
- 3 Core** All those rapid changes of direction create great balance and a strong core. (Read: slim waist, toned tummy, strong back).
- 4 Lower body** Jumping and lunging for shots is a great way to tone up your calves, thighs and bum.
- 5 Bones** As tennis is a weight-bearing activity, it stimulates bone growth. Playing regularly will increase spinal bone density, reducing osteoporosis risk. ➔





*'Low-compression balls are great for beginners – they're green or orange, less bouncy, and easier to control than regular balls'*

SAM RICHARDSON, TENNIS COACH

## *'How I learned to love tennis'*



*Racquet sports-phobic, HANNAH EBELTHITE, 35, tried a Cardio Tennis fitness class at the National Tennis Centre, Roehampton.*

I was toying with the idea of tennis lessons, when I heard about a new craze – no ball skills required. One and a half million people play Cardio Tennis every week in the US, where it was developed in 2005. 'It's an exercise class that takes place on court, with music,' coach Sam Richardson tells me. 'There are up to 14 participants, you wear heart-rate monitors and there's no technical instruction, it's just about keeping moving.' Sure enough, from the moment I stepped onto court, I didn't stand still. We did round-robin-style games, interspersed with drills like hopping back and forth over your racquet on the floor (harder than it sounds). It's as full-on and sweaty as a high-energy aerobics class, yet I felt it was even better for my fitness as I was using my body in new ways – twisting, turning, sprinting forwards and back, stretching up and reaching down.

Best of all, it was sociable and great fun! I'd recommend it to anyone who lacks the confidence at the sport, as well as good players who want to up their fitness level.

*To find out more, visit [www.cardiotennis.com](http://www.cardiotennis.com)  
To find a class near you, visit [www.lta.org.uk](http://www.lta.org.uk),  
click on 'Find a court' and tick the 'Cardio Tennis' filter.*



## BREAK POINT

Our pick of the best tennis holidays

### BEST FOR... close to home

Jonathan Markson Oxford Tennis Camp,  
[www.marksontennis.com](http://www.marksontennis.com)

A six-day break in student accommodation using the university's grass and hard courts. Costs £940, inclusive of board, meals and 30-hours' coaching, for all levels.



### BEST FOR... mind, body and soul

Tuscan Tennis Holidays, Italy  
[www.tuscanytennis.com](http://www.tuscanytennis.com)

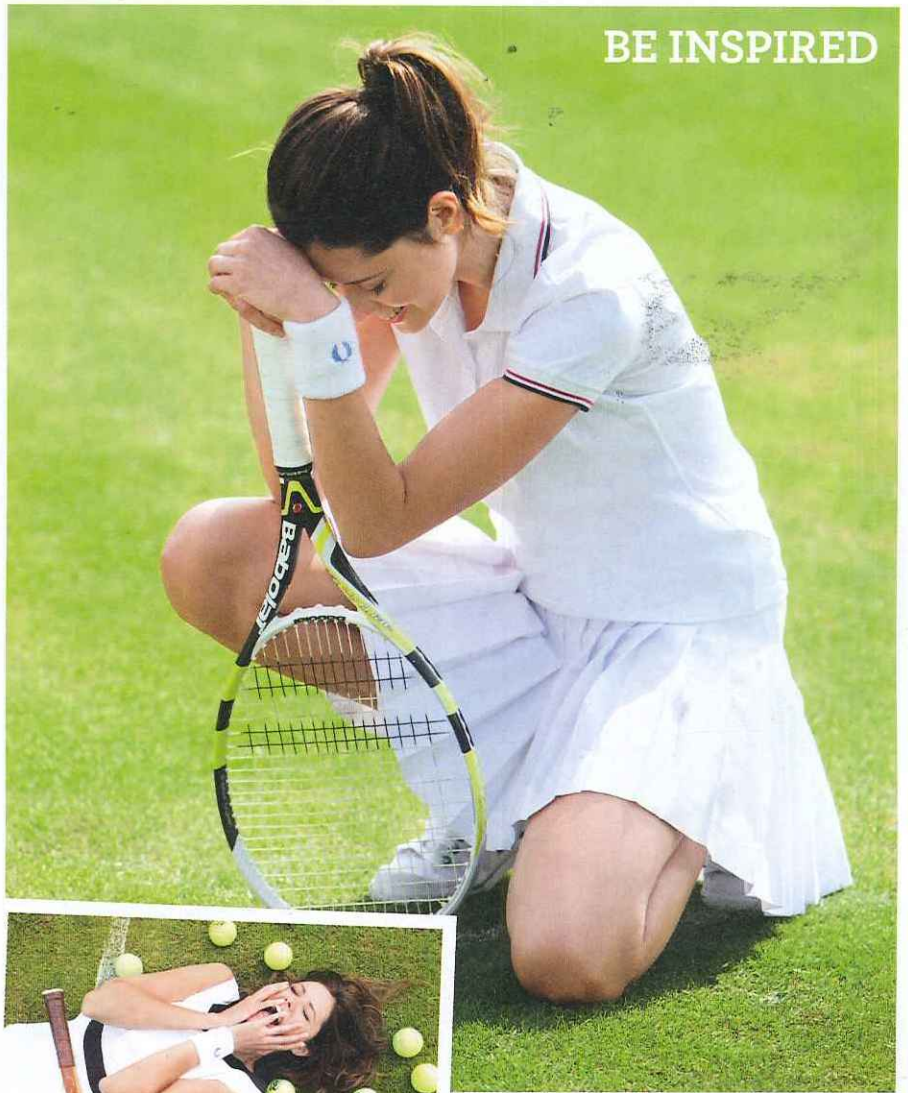
Take it easy, with two hours' training a day (although serious players can opt for the Train Like A Pro package). Coaching only from £270pp, per week.



### BEST FOR... a family break

La Manga, Spain, [www.tennisholiday.co.uk](http://www.tennisholiday.co.uk)

The world-famous La Manga offers crèche and kids facilities, as well as golf, a spa, activities galore and 28 tennis courts. All manner of coaching packages are available for all levels.



BE INSPIRED



## MORE TENNIS TRENDS

**Racketlon** A sport in which you play your opponent in table tennis, badminton, squash, then tennis – one set of each, from smallest to largest racket. Find out more at [www.racketlon.co.uk](http://www.racketlon.co.uk).

**Touch Tennis** This is played on a tiny, quarter-size court, with small rackets and slower, softer balls. It has gained a big cult following among adult players for its strategic element. Find out more at [www.touchtennis.com](http://www.touchtennis.com).

**TennisFit** This four-week, Pilates-based class aims to get participants ready for the tennis season by teaching strength and endurance, flexibility to reach more shots, power for a bigger serve, balance, and speed and agility. Visit [www.tenpilates.com](http://www.tenpilates.com).

Top Santé tip!

*'When warming up, start close to the net and gradually work backwards. You stand more chance of a decent rally. Start on the baseline and you'll lose direction and consistency'*

CARL JANSEN, DAVID LLOYD TENNIS COACH



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1 **Adidas by Stella McCartney Tennis Bag**, £124.99, [www.sheactive.co.uk](http://www.sheactive.co.uk). Designed to fit your racquet and other kit. 2 **Adidas by Stella McCartney silver cap**, £29.99, [www.sheactive.co.uk](http://www.sheactive.co.uk). An on-court essential for summer play. 3 **Zoom Courtlite 3 Nike Lunar Speed 3 Women's Tennis Shoe**, £90.00, [www.store.nike.com](http://www.store.nike.com). This trainer has a lightweight design for quick feet on the court. 4 **Zoca Tennis Dress**, £55.99, [www.sheactive.co.uk](http://www.sheactive.co.uk). The AQUAMOVE fabric transports sweat away from the skin leaving you feeling dry. 5 **Ryders Vela sunglasses**, £37, [www.ryderseyewear.com](http://www.ryderseyewear.com). Cool shades that offer 100% UV protection plus temple and nose pads to keep them in place. 6 **Shock Absorber racquet sports bra**, £37, [www.undercoverexperience.co.uk](http://www.undercoverexperience.co.uk). Reduces the side-to-side breast movement caused in tennis by up to 78%. 7 **Ultrasun High SPF30 Sports Clear Spray Formula**, £26. A once-a-day transparent formula that resists sweat and lets skin breathe. 8 **SPC Ginger Body Scrub 500g**, £35, [www.speskinicare.com](http://www.speskinicare.com). This will leave you feeling revitalised and relaxed after a tough game. 9 **Dunlop Fort tennis ball**, from £4.99 for 3, [dunlopsport.com](http://dunlopsport.com). 10 **Biomimetic 500 Tour**, £159.99, [www.dunlopsport.com](http://www.dunlopsport.com). A great racquet for improvers and those with a shorter swing. 11 **Casio Baby-G Gasket Slim Watch**, £69.99, [www.surfdome.com](http://www.surfdome.com). Stylish, water-resistant and has a stopwatch too!

# Top Santé's MUST-HAVES

Our pick of the kit you need to look match-fit

WORDS HANNAH EBELTHITE PHOTOGRAPHS STANLEY ST JOHN MODEL BLANKA WAJNBERG HAIR AND MAKE-UP RACHEAL JONES USING BOBBI BROWN STYLIST CLAIRE BLAKE WITH THANKS TO STONE PARK FOR USE OF THESE AMAZING GROUNDS 01753 717171 CLOTHES FIRST SPREAD, TOP TK MAXX SKIRT