

Guide to Selecting Volleyball Equipment

Physiotherapy in Comox for Volleyball

Welcome to Bodyworx Physiotherapy Pilates & Health's guide for selecting volleyball equipment.

We recommend a few general considerations for selecting your equipment in order to stay comfortable and minimize injury while playing volleyball. The basic equipment you will require for indoor volleyball are court shoes, but knee pads and ankle braces are regularly used by many players as well. For beach (outdoor) volleyball there is no special equipment required but you will need to plan for sun protection and hydration.

Runners/Court Shoes:

Any indoor athletic shoe is adequate for the beginner volleyball player, however, the use of runners versus court shoes can lead to more ankle sprains due to the higher heel height (made for shock absorption) in the runner. If you plan to keep playing volleyball or are playing at a higher level, good court shoes are a wise investment. The sole of a court shoe is made less for running shock absorption and more for gripping the floor and allowing for the repetitive and quick movements that the sport requires. When trying on the shoe be sure to wear the socks you will use to play in and put on any ankle braces you regularly wear to ensure they fit the shoe. Choose a shoe that fits extremely well: if they are too big you will quickly end up with blisters, and if they are too tight, you will experience pain and bruising in your toes and toenails. Replace your shoes regularly to maximize the support they give you; any visible smoothing of the sole or wearing through of the mesh means it is time for a new pair.

Socks:

Due to the repetitive motions required on the volleyball court, blisters are common, but you can avoid blisters by both choosing the correct shoes (see above) as well as the correct socks. Blisters are caused by repetitive friction, heat, and moisture, so minimizing these factors will decrease your chance of developing them. Choose a sock that is form fitting (not tube socks) and one that is made with a breathable and moisture-wicking material. Ensure the sock fits very well as any slipping will cause excess friction. Some volleyball players choose to wear two pairs of socks so any friction that does occur happens between the two layers of socks rather than against the skin. Lastly, ensure any hotspot (area that feels like a blister is starting) is tended to IMMEDIATELY. Avoiding blisters is much easier than treating them once they occur.

Knee Pads:

Knee pads are commonly worn by indoor volleyball players to protect the knee from the impact of the floor when diving for a ball or going down onto one knee when passing a ball. In selecting knee pads it is important to choose a material that breathes and is lightweight. When you try the pads on they should feel snug but not overly tight and fit well to the contour of your legs. Be sure to try squatting while wearing the pads to ensure the material is comfortable, the pad doesn't slip, and it is not too bulky behind your knee. The thickness of the knee protector pad can vary immensely so choose a pad that feels adequate for you when you kneel (feels like it would soften the impact of the hard ground when you play.) Lastly, ensure the positioning of the padding covers the knee cap, but remember you can move the pad from side to side to ensure the right positioning for your individual knee anatomy. It is wise to test the position of your knee pad each time before playing to avoid any unnecessary bruises or floor burns.

Ankle Braces:

Ankle sprains occur often in volleyball due to the frequent action near the net with many players in a small space at one time. Often a player will land on another player's foot after playing a tight ball near the net or when landing after jumping up for a block. Due to the high incidence of volleyball ankle sprains, many players prophylactically wear ankle braces. If you have already sustained an ankle sprain in the past, you may need to consider using braces as part of your regular volleyball equipment. The brace needs to help protect the ankle from rolling both inwards (most common injury) and outwards. There are many, many different types of braces available in a range of prices and effectiveness so selection is crucial. The brace should be somewhat stiff in order to provide protection, but should comfortably fit inside your shoe. Most braces that truly provide protection from further ankle sprains will extend up your leg past the ankle joint. Your physiotherapist in *client_area* can provide some valuable advice to help you choose the right individual braces for you.

Sun Protection Gear:

If you are playing beach volleyball apply sunscreen and lip balm before you go outside and re-apply often. Many beach volleyball enthusiasts play only in their swimwear, but if you feel comfortable, wear more clothing that offers protection from the sun. A hat with a brim should be worn to combat the effects of the heat and provide some protection to your face. Don't forget sunglasses which are crucial for protecting your eyes from the sun and the glare of the sand or nearby water.

Hydration Gear:

Keeping hydrated will help you stay alert while playing volleyball, both indoors and on the beach. It may also help to prevent muscle cramps and will help your post game recovery. Taking your own drink bottles to training or a game helps you to keep track of your fluid intake. We recommend that you drink about 300-400 mL before you play (ref: http://www.ausport.gov.au/sportscoachmag/nutrition2/pre-event_nutrition), and 250mL (1 cup) of water or sports drink every 20 minutes of physical playing/training time or time in the sun and for one hour after your game. These are just general guidelines as fluid requirements will vary depending on the environmental conditions and your body size. Obviously, when playing beach volleyball, the hotter it is, the more fluid you will lose so the more you will have to replace. To check that you are adequately hydrating, you can weigh yourself before and after your games or training. If your weight remains the same then you are likely to be well hydrated. Also, remember that by the time you feel thirsty, your body is already dehydrated, so drink frequently and don't let thirst alone determine your fluid intake.

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[Stretching Guide for Volleyball](#)