

Can racquet sports give you a fitter, longer life?

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(HealthDay)—When you think of effective cardio exercise, the activities

most likely to come to mind are aerobics classes, running, swimming and cycling. But racquet sports like tennis may hold even greater benefits, according to research published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*.

And, as a bonus, they could also be more fun, making it easier to meet your fitness goals.

After reviewing data from 80,000 people, researchers found that participants in racquet sports reduced their risk of early death by 47%. Racquet sports beat out swimming and [aerobics](#), the second and third most-protective exercises, by double digits. Cycling came in fourth.

The numbers were even higher for reducing the risk of death from [heart disease](#) or stroke, though swimming and aerobics were still beneficial because they work the upper and lower body, which helps train the heart. Also, whatever activity the [study participants](#) chose, the more often they exercised, the more their risk of early death dropped.

Exercise and Risk of Early Death

- 47% lower risk of early death with racquet sports
- 28% lower with swimming
- 27% lower with aerobics
- 15% lower with cycling

Never picked up a racquet? The U.S. Tennis Association has information to help you get started, including where to find programs in your area. Besides being a great [exercise](#), tennis helps with balance, strength and flexibility, all essential for lifelong fitness. Whether you play singles or doubles, the social aspect of tennis is another important benefit.

Also consider squash and racquetball. These sports use different-sized

racquets and balls, and the courts are enclosed. Both games are played within a smaller area than [tennis](#), but the play is often more intense.

More information: The U.S. Tennis Association has details on every aspect of [tennis](#) from rules to instructional tips.

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