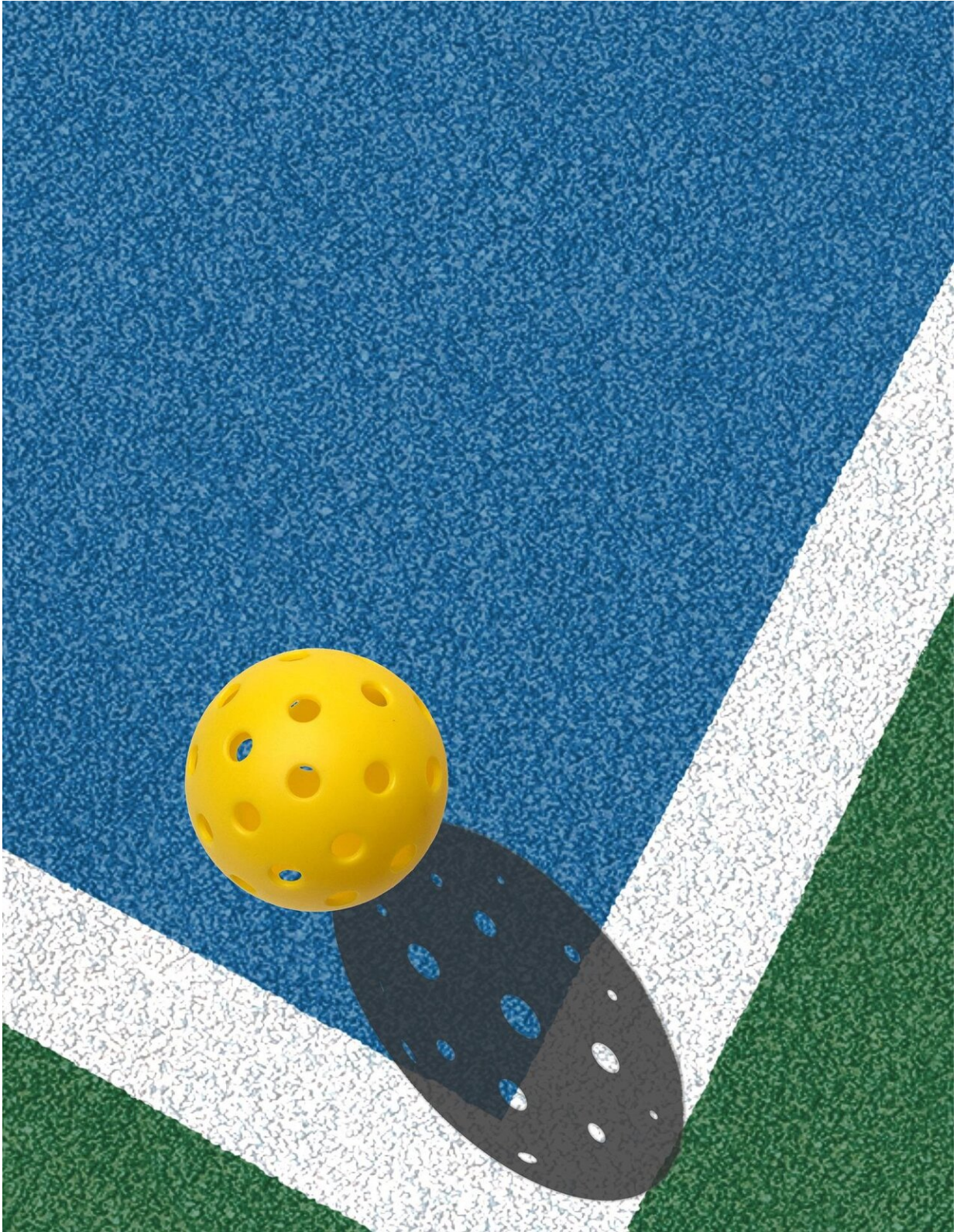


Pickleball helps older adults stay physically active

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Pickleball isn't just fun and easy to play—it's also potentially heart healthy. Playing pickleball helped a small group of adults aged 65 years and older reach their recommend weekly dose of moderate to vigorous physical activity, according to a pilot study by North Carolina State University researchers.

"We know it's an enjoyable activity, but what we didn't know was: Are older adult participants getting enough moderate to high intensity activity to reach the level critical for cardiovascular health?" asked the study's lead author Jonathan Casper, associate professor of parks, recreation and tourism management at NC State.

"This [pilot study](#) provides objective data to support that pickleball participation is an activity that promotes [older adults'](#) physical activity and helps participants meet CDC and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommendations."

In the study, published in *Recreational Sports Journal*, researchers tracked the physical activity of 33 adults aged 65 years and older who played pickleball at least two times per week. They tracked participants' steps and intensity of physical activity during a two-week period using Fitbits.

Participants averaged 3,477 more steps on days they played pickleball, and they also spent more time engaged in "very active" and "fairly active" physical activity. They found participants averaged more than 68 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per pickleball session. In addition, participants averaged 86.77 minutes in three increased heart rate zones in an average session.

"There are three important factors for successful healthy aging," Casper

said. "No. 1 is [physical health](#), and staying not just physically active, but engaging in physical activity where your heart rate is raised, which is called moderate to [vigorous physical activity](#). There is also a social component, which is maintaining and creating [social connections](#), and [psychological health](#), or a feeling of well-being and life satisfaction."

With regard to physical activity, the CDC and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommend older adults should get between 150 and 300 minutes of moderate-intensity activity or 75 and 150 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity during the week. In this study, pickleball was the reason that most participants met the physical activity guideline, Casper said.

"We were able to isolate their pickleball activity versus everyday activity, and our key finding was that pickleball was the sole reason most participants were able to meet CDC standards," Casper said. "Pickleball participation was what helped them reach that threshold."

In future studies, researchers are planning to compare pickleball with other sports older adults play to understand differences in [physical activity](#), social-psychological benefits, and injury risk.

The study, "Physical Activity Associated with Older Adult Pickleball," was published in the *Recreational Sports Journal*.

More information: Jonathan M. Casper et al, Physical Activity Associated with Older Adult Pickleball Participation: A Pilot Study, *Recreational Sports Journal* (2023). [DOI: 10.1177/15588661231156139](https://doi.org/10.1177/15588661231156139)

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