

Get Fit, Have Fun

By Michele Krause



With Cardio Tennis, it's about the workout, not the competition.

Imagine playing nonstop tennis for an hour, burning hundreds of calories, hitting dozens of balls...and having a ton of fun the whole time. That's Cardio Tennis.

Launched in 2005 by the Tennis Industry Association, there are now more than 1,700 facilities and parks in the U.S. offering Cardio Tennis, and the program is in 30 countries. In fact, in just four years, Cardio Tennis has been so successful that recent research by the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association shows more people play CT than play squash in the U.S. It's great for all players, including new players and to bring former players back into tennis.

What is Cardio Tennis? Generally, it's a 60-minute class where the focus is on having fun while working out—not on tennis instruction. In fact, there's little to no instruction in the typical CT class, but players do improve their tennis because of the repetition, the large number of balls they hit, and the realistic and challenging “play” situations.

In a CT class, the warm-up includes a dynamic movement exercise, a catching/toss-

ing skill and light hitting. The cardio portion is the bulk of the class (35 to 45 minutes) and is about 30 percent drills and 70 percent play-based games. The last segment is the cool-down, which includes activities to safely bring the heart rate down and to do some light stretching.

Benefits of Cardio Tennis

It's no secret that tennis is great exercise for people of all ages. But Cardio Tennis takes it to another level—and the important thing is, you're having so much fun, even though you're working so hard, that you don't even realize you're doing some of the best things you possibly can for your health. For many people, CT is a much better fitness option than trying to drag yourself to a gym for a rather routine and boring workout.

CT participants consistently get their heart rates into their effective training zones easily because they're enjoying the activity. When that happens, they burn more calories than

in singles or doubles tennis, and more than in many other fitness options. On average, with eight people in a class, women will burn 300 to 500 calories and men 500 to 1,000 calories.

Importantly, Cardio Tennis also helps fight obesity. In fact, many people use CT to lose weight (you can read about some these “success stories”—with participants losing as much as 100 pounds—at www.cardiotennis.com). Recently, I was asked to do a Cardio Tennis class for a bride-to-be and her wedding party, because she had gained weight and needed to fit into her wedding dress!

Even though the focus of Cardio is on getting a great workout (and the “interval training” aspect of CT is important for a healthy heart and overall fitness), you're also “playing” tennis, and there's no better way to train for tennis than by being on the tennis court. The American College of Sports Medicine recommends a minimum of two hours of exercise per week at moderate intensity or one hour per week at high intensity. Cardio Tennis twice per week more than fulfills this recommendation.

The Cardio Tennis Difference

In CT, you're in constant motion—there's no standing around. After you hit a ball, you do quick footwork and other drills as you get back into position for the next ball. And there are several key tools that differentiate CT from other types of tennis or "workout" classes.

● **Heart-rate monitors:** While you don't have to wear a heart-rate monitor, it helps to ensure a safe and healthy workout. Also, it helps the tennis pro to know who needs to be challenged and who might need some rest a bit. At the end of the class, the monitor will tell you what your average heart rate was, how long you were in your zone and how many calories you burned. Some facilities loan them, but it's a great training tool for any athletic activity, so you might want to invest in one for yourself.

● **Music:** This creates a party atmosphere and attracts new players to the game. The music is fast-paced, similar to what you would hear in a group exercise class. Research shows that when people listen to music while working out, they train 33 percent harder, their endurance improves 15 percent and their blood vessels to dilate, which increases blood flow. Believe it or not, CT is changing the way people view music on the court. In fact, some facilities are putting speakers on the courts and playing music throughout the day, not just during Cardio Tennis.

● **Agility ladder:** This and other on-court tools (cones, throw-down lines, etc.) are great to improve footwork in a fun and challenging way. They keep you moving between shots, rather than standing in line.

● **Transition balls:** These include foam and low-compression balls. They're quickly becoming a staple in a teaching pro's arsenal for all types of lesson programming for all ages. In CT, we might use foam balls in warm-up and cool down exercises and low-compressions balls during the games-based segment.

Using low compression balls is advantageous for any ability level. For a group with beginners or new players, this ball moves slower so it gives them more time to react and set-up. If the ability level is mixed these balls equalize the playing field. If the group is advanced it is much more difficult to hit a clean winner therefore the ball stays in play longer, which is what Cardio Tennis is all about.

Cardio Tennis is a safe, healthy and fun way to work out on the tennis court. It's for players of all ability levels, provides tremendous health benefits, and is very social with lots of camaraderie. With Cardio, you can do something great for your health, and improve your tennis, too. 🔄



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE TENNIS INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

Cardio for All Ages

Cardio Tennis is for players of all levels and ages. Former US Open champ Tracy Austin does Cardio Tennis three times a week as her workout. For advanced players, it can be a break from their normal training activities and they can work on specific shots and spins in realistic situations.

And Cardio Tennis is for kids, too! Kids 10 and under will participate in Cardio Tennis using QuickStart Tennis guidelines and pedometers. For this age group 15 to 20 minutes of Cardio can be sufficient.

What You Can Expect in Cardio Tennis

- A tennis pro who is engaging and motivating.
- Getting into your target heart rate zone quickly.
- Games and drills that are both "cooperative" and "competitive."
- A safe, healthy workout designed for everyone, from beginning players to advanced, from kids to seniors.

Michele Krause, the National Cardio Tennis Manager for the Tennis Industry Association, has been with Cardio Tennis since its creation in 2005.

For more on Cardio Tennis, and to find a class near you, visit www.cardiotennis.com. If your local facility doesn't offer CT, talk to your tennis director and or email info@cardiotennis.com.