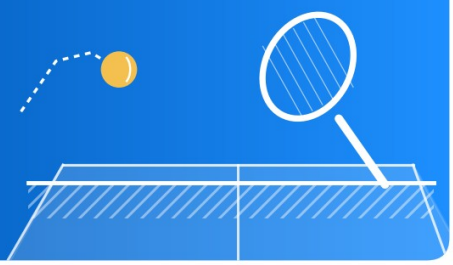
PATIENT INFORMATION

Back on the Court

Tennis after minimally invasive spine surgery: what to expect



Good news: most tennis players can get back on the court after spine surgery. Once the back or leg pain that was slowing you down is gone, many find the game **more** enjoyable than before.

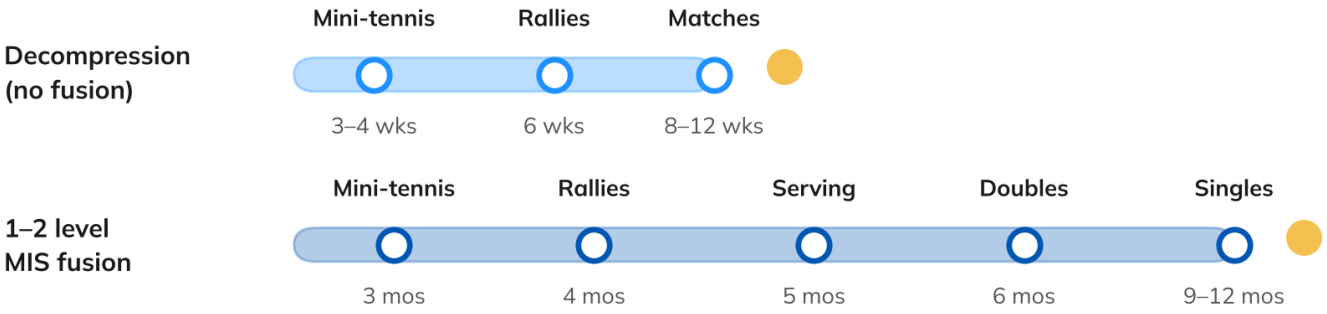
7 in 10
keep or improve their game once back on court

6 in 7
play with the same or less pain than before

70%
average drop in back pain after surgery

Figures come from patients who had larger spinal fusions; smaller minimally invasive operations usually recover faster.

YOUR ROAD BACK TO THE COURT



Typical times; your surgeon will tailor the plan to your surgery and recovery.

WILL MY GAME CHANGE?

- **Decompression (no fusion):** most players return to their usual level within a few months.
- **Fusion of one or two levels:** most players return, often starting with doubles. The serve and overheads usually come back last; some players adjust their serve or play a bit less singles.
- **Larger surgeries** take longer, often a year or more, but even then most who return keep their level.

TIPS FOR A STRONG COMEBACK

- **Do your physical therapy.** Strong core, hips and legs take the load off your spine.
- **Start with doubles.** Less running and fewer hard, twisting shots while you rebuild.
- **Go easy on the serve.** Avoid arching your back; a slice serve is gentler than a kick serve. A lesson with a pro helps.
- **Choose softer courts.** Clay or cushioned courts are kinder to your back than hard courts.
- **Warm up** before you play and stop if you feel sharp or new pain.

Based on published studies of athletes after spine surgery. Every patient is different; please follow your own surgical team's instructions.

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