



Sony Ericsson
WTA TOUR

Q&A: MTO muscle cramping

Q-1 What was the purpose of the rule change?

A-1 It has been a long time debate as to whether a player suffering from muscle cramping should be allowed to stop play and receive a 3-minute MTO. Is this a treatable medical condition or is it rather lack of conditioning? There is a growing medical consensus that the vast majority of muscle cramping during competition is the result of dehydration, overuse—or lack of conditioning/fatigue—and is not a result of heat illness. The old rules on muscle cramping did not allow for treatment of any kind for a player with cramps; the current rule goes to the other end of the spectrum by assuming that all muscle cramping is a manifestation of heat illness, thereby allowing a player to stop play and have a 3-minute MTO. The 2010 rule is felt to be a good compromise whereby the integrity of the competition is maintained and the health and well-being of the player is preserved.

Q-2 And how does this new rule affect the player's right to a MTO for heat related illness?

A-2 Heat illness is an acute medical condition that usually manifests as dizziness, nausea/vomiting, sluggish behavior, and hyperthermia (elevated temperature). The vast majority of players who have muscle cramping do not have any clinical manifestations of heat illness. The 2010 rule targets “muscle cramping” as a condition that is excluded from a MTO. The Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP and / or Tournament Doctor has the final say as to whether the player is suffering with a treatable medical condition that is not simply muscle cramping.

Q-3 When can a player be treated for muscle cramping?

A-3 Treatment for muscle cramping is limited to two (2) full changeover/set-breaks. If the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP can only treat for a portion of a changeover/set-break due to time taken for evaluation or by not arriving to the court, then the player could still be treated at two (2) further changeover/set-breaks.

Q-4 Who decides if the player is suffering with muscle cramping?

A-4 All medical decisions are determined by the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP and/or the Tournament Doctor.

Q-5 Why must the determination of muscle cramping only be made by the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP and/or Tournament Doctor?

A-5 There could be circumstances where the player is presenting with muscle cramping, however, there is an underlying more serious condition that is contributing to the muscle cramping and when left undiagnosed could put the player at a serious health risk.

Q- 6 **If a Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP determines a player has spasm induced cramping associated with an injury is this considered muscle cramping?**

A-6 No. Spasm induced muscle guarding/spasm is a specific type of muscle reaction that can exist in conjunction with an injury such as a muscle strain or a back injury in order to protect that area.

Q-7 **The score is 6-3 3-1 and player A states to the chair umpire that s/he needs to see the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP, what does the chair say to the player in response?**

A-7 **Chair:** I will call for the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP and you can see him/her on the changeover. What is your medical condition so I can inform the physiotherapist?

Player: I cannot continue to play; I must see the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP now.

Chair: I will call the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP, what is your medical condition?

Player: I have injured my leg.

Chair: Calls the Supervisor/Referee and informs him/her that the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP is needed on court for player A; leg injury; play has stopped.

Q-8 **Same score as in Q-7 above, but the player says to the chair umpire that s/he needs to see the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP because s/he is cramping.**

A-8 **Chair:** I will call for the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP and you can see him/her on the changeover. [the chair umpire should call for Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP to come to the court ASAP in case his/her assistance is needed sooner than the next changeover]

Player: I cannot continue to play; I must see the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP now.

Chair: I will call the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP now [Chair umpire stops play and wait s for the trainer who will determine the medical condition – neither the player him/herself nor the chair umpire can determine the medical condition of a player, i.e. whether it is muscle cramping or not]

Chair: Calls the Supervisor/Referee and informs him that the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP is needed on court for player A; potential cramping condition; play has stopped.

Q-9 **A player appears to have developed muscle cramping in the first game of the final set. The condition is severe enough so that the player cannot continue play; the player is up 40-0 in this game. What should happen?**

A-9 - Only the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP in conjunction with the Tournament Doctor, if appropriate, may determine that a player is suffering from muscle cramping.

- In the case that a player cannot continue to play; play is stopped and the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP is called to the court to evaluate.

- If the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP and/or Tournament Doctor determine that the player is suffering from muscle cramping, then the CU will inform the player that s/he must play.

- If the player cannot continue without treatment, s/he cannot be treated until the changeover is reached; therefore, the CU should confirm with the player that s/he is forfeiting the points

required to reach a score that gets the match to the changeover / set break. Once confirmed, the CU should announce the new score.

If the player is in a critical state, such as writhing on the court, the CU, Supervisor, Referee or other on-court officials may, and should, attend to the player while waiting for medical help to arrive.

- Q-10 **At 7-6 2-3 the player asks for the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP. The Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP, who had already been alerted and was on the way to the court, arrives after 30 seconds has elapsed and upon evaluation the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP and/or Tournament Doctor confirms that the player has muscle cramping. What is the procedure?**
- A-10 The Physiotherapist/Athletic Training/PHCP may treat during the remaining time of this changeover plus two full changeovers.
- Q-11 **A player is receiving his/her first full changeover treatment for muscle cramping at 2/1 in the 3rd set, when the chair umpire calls Time, the player feels more treatment is necessary before he/she can have a chance to resume play: can the player decide to forfeit the next 2 games in order to get to the next changeover and therefore benefit immediately from the second changeover treatment allowed for muscle cramping?**
- A-11 Yes, the player can opt for this. The chair umpire would reset the clock at the end of the first go second changeover and start a new changeover. Appropriate announcements would have to be made to explain the situation to the crowd and what the score is.
- Q-12 **Is the forfeiting of points / games a part of the Code of Conduct?**
- A-12 No. The player may forfeit the number of points required to take him/her straight to the changeover / set break without it being part of the Code of Conduct.
- Q-13 **The score is 7-6 1-3 and the chair umpire and/or the Supervisor/Referee notice that it looks like the player is developing muscle cramping. What action should the CU and/or Supervisor/Referee take?**
- A-13 The CU or Supervisor/Referee should call the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP and alert him/her to the fact that a player may be developing muscle cramping.
- Q-14 **At 76 67 the match time has just reached the 2 hour mark. The temperature is quite hot. What should the CU do?**
- A-14 The instructions for the day, coming from the Supervisor/Referee and/or the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP should be for the CU's to call when any match reaches the 2 hour mark. This is so the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP, time permitting, can come near the court and see if there are any signs of medical illness or muscle cramping. The

Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP may even ask the CU when s/he makes the call if the players look OK.

Q-15 What about the case where the player has received treatment on the two changeovers but is still cramping and the level of competition does not appear to be of a professional standard?

A-15 The Supervisor/Referee may, after consultation with the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP and/or Tournament Doctor, determine that the match should not continue and retire the player in order to protect the player and the integrity of the game.

This can be done if either of the following two conditions are met,

- 1) the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP in conjunction with the Tournament Doctor's opinion is that for the player to continue s/he is jeopardizing his/her health and safety; or
- 2) the player is not able to compete in a professional manner.

This decision should not be taken lightly and if the player's health and safety is not at risk, you should be sure that it is not likely the player could play through and recover to the extent that competing at a level high enough to win or be competitive is possible.

Q-16 If the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP provides medication, does this count as one of the two changeover treatments?

A-16 No.

Q-17 At a SE WTA match where the heat rule is in effect, at 1 set all one player is calling for the PHCP prior to leaving the court. It is determined by the PHCP that the player is suffering from muscle cramping. How is the timing of this treatment handled?

A-17 The PHCP is allowed to treat the muscle cramping on-court for 120 seconds (time of set break) and then the player may leave the court for the remaining time of the heat break.

Q-18 At a SE WTA event, would On-Court Coaching (OCC) be allowed for the opponent when a player is receiving changeover treatments for muscle cramping?

A-18 No. The muscle cramping changeover treatments would be considered the same as the follow-up changeover treatments after an MTO. However, when the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP is called on-court the first time to evaluate the medical condition, then the opponent can call her coach on-court pending the arrival/evaluation/decision of the Physiotherapist/Athletic Trainer/PHCP, if the player is determined to suffer from muscle cramping, then the opponent's coach will be asked to leave the court immediately, even if the cramping player decides to forfeit points and get treated immediately.

NOTE: Please note the paragraph in the Medical Rule: “ If it is determined by the Chair Umpire or Referee/Supervisor that gamesmanship was involved, then a Code Violation for Unsportsmanlike Conduct could be issued”.