

Tennis Elbow

General Information

Tennis Elbow (lateral epicondylitis) is a condition that causes pain and tenderness in the bony bump on the outer part of the elbow. The condition commonly occurs between the ages of 30 and 60, with the most frequent incidence appearing in patients in their 40s.

When you repeatedly overuse the forearm muscles that straighten and raise the hand and wrist, the condition can develop. By overusing the muscle, tendons become inflamed and small tears in the tendon tissue can occur. These muscles then may strain and irritate their attachment at the bone on the outside of the elbow.

Causes of Tennis Elbow?

Despite the name of the condition, tennis elbow can be caused by other activities besides playing racquet sports. Many commonplace activities can strain the tendons, such as:

- Painting
- Carrying heavy items
- Golf
- Carpentry
- Typing
- Knitting
- Machine Work
- Tennis

Basically, any activity that twists and extends the wrist can lead to tennis elbow. In rare circumstances, a direct blow to the outside of the elbow can also lead to the condition.

Symptoms of Tennis Elbow?

The first sign of tennis elbow is usually tenderness and pain when pressure is applied to the outside of the elbow. If left untreated, a dull constant pain or sharp shooting pain can be felt. Swelling may be present. Other symptoms include:

- Pain when the wrist or hand is straightened
- Pain felt when lifting a heavy object
- Pain when making a fist or shaking hands
- Shooting pains from the elbow down to the forearm or up into the upper arm

Sometimes other conditions that are not linked to tennis elbow can cause pain in the elbow. For example, arthritis of the elbow, a pinched nerve in the neck and [carpal tunnel syndrome](#) are other conditions that cause similar symptoms. Your doctor will be able to accurately diagnose your condition by asking you about your daily and recreational activities and examining your elbow and arm. You will probably have to do movements that cause pain in the outer part of the elbow. In addition, he or she may order X-rays of the elbow.

Treatment

The type and duration of the treatment will depend on the severity of the condition. The first step in treating tennis elbow is to eliminate the activities that cause the pain, such as tennis or golf. Your physician may prescribe an anti-inflammatory medication, like ibuprofen, to reduce the swelling. He or she may also inject cortisone directly to the area to reduce the pain.

A tennis elbow strap can be worn just below the elbow to provide support to the area. To limit the movement of the stressed muscles and tendons, a splint that immobilizes the wrist could also be used.

Treating the area with an ice pack and performing an ice massage are also recommended. If ice and anti-

inflammatory medications do not work, your physician will instruct you on physical therapy exercises designed to strengthen the forearm muscles. Many patients start to respond a week or two after they have started treatments.

If the condition does not respond to the above treatments, surgery may be necessary.

To prevent tennis elbow from reoccurring, it is important to make sure you keep the muscles strong by exercise and using the proper form whether playing tennis or lifting heavy objects. Warming up before starting to use the muscle will also help prevent the condition. After exercising, you may want to ice and stretch the elbow and arm muscles