



Tennis Elbow

Tennis Elbow is the common name used to describe pain felt around the outside of the elbow. Your doctor may have called it 'lateral epicondylitis'. It is caused by inflammation of the tendon which joins the muscles which bend the wrist and fingers backwards.

Not only do tennis or other racket sport players suffer from tennis elbow, in fact, it is more common amongst non-sports players. Any activity or occupation which involves excessive use of the wrist or twisting and turning the forearm can cause this problem.

Pain can also be felt in the forearm and back of the hand.

What to do after a sudden injury

Rest: from the cause of injury for a few days or until the pain (and swelling, if you have any) are reducing. Then gradually return to normal activity.

Ice: helps to control any swelling and eases the pain. Use crushed ice or a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel. In the first 24 hours it can be used for 5 -10 minutes every hour. Over the next 24 - 48 hours it can be used for 15 minutes every 2 hours. After this, once or twice a day for 5 -10 days.

When not to use ice

- 1 If you have a circulatory problem
- 1 On areas that are numb
- 1 If you have 'pins and needles' around your elbow
- 1 Never on the front of the neck

These exercises are designed to help

Try to practice your exercises twice a day and repeat each exercise 10 - 15 times.

1. Rotation of the shoulder

Lay on your back and put your affected arm out to the side. Then turn your arm so that the hand faces down and turn the other way so the hand faces up.

Keeping other joints moving helps to put less strain on the elbows.

2. Stretching the wrist

Put your arm on a table with your wrist at the edge. Bend your wrist down over the table towards the floor and then back up towards you.

3. Elbow and wrist turning

Put your arm on a table with your elbow bent and your palm turned down. Turn your hand to face up then back to palm down.

Exercises 2 and 3 should be done with the elbow straight after 2 - 3 weeks.

4. Whole arm stretch

With your arm by your side, pull your hand back with the unaffected hand and hold for 5 seconds.

Release and repeat 5 times

5. Wrist and finger stretch exercises

Put a 1 - 2lb weight in a bag and lift up with your hand.

Tablets: A good painkiller available from the chemist may help or a short course of an anti-inflammatory drug (*Ibuprofen*).

Pressure: over the back of the elbow may help. Try using a *Tubigrip* bandage.

As the pain recedes

A Tennis Elbow support (which are widely available from chemists, sports shops and some supermarkets) may help you return to normal activities at work and also sport.

If you play racket sports, try altering:

- 1 the grip size of your racket
- 1 the weight of your racket
- 1 the tension of your strings

It is a good idea to warm up and perform a general stretching routine before you play.

Initially you may have to slow your return to sport by:

- 1 playing less frequently
- 1 playing less competitively
- 1 playing for a shorter time
- 1 having a mid-game break