

What is a Tennis Elbow?

Tennis elbow or lateral Epicondylitis is inflammation of the outer extensor muscle tendons of the wrist where they attach to the humerus bone at the elbow.

This condition is often be caused by repetitive movements and gripping actions common in tennis, racket sports and certain work environments.

Repetitive movements to the wrist or arm can cause increased stress to the wrist extensor muscles and their tendon attachment. Microtears / trauma to the tendon build up over time leading to inflammation and pain. Pain leads to weakness in the wrist muscles which puts further strain on the tendons.

Signs and Symptoms

- Tennis elbow usually affects the arm of your dominant hand.
- The symptoms usually develop gradually. The main symptom is pain and tenderness in the outside of the elbow and sometimes in the muscles on top of the forearm. The pain may go away after a day or so, but may become progressively worse as the tendon damage builds up.
- The pain may become constant, and even interrupt your sleep.
- Morning stiffness in the arm and pain on turning door handles or shaking hands.
- Difficulty lifting.

Causes

- Frequency of play of racket sport.
- Repetitive work environments.
- Reduced strength and flexibility of forearm extensors.
- Poor lifting technique.
- Constant/ repetitive strain on the forearm extensors.
- Arthritis/gout.
- Direct trauma/injury.

* Lack of treatment and inadequate rehabilitation can lead to prolonged symptoms, decreased activity, decreased sporting performance and a high risk of reoccurrence.

Initial assessment and Management

- Reduce the repetitive activity that is aggravating your elbow e.g. change your working position, reduce your sporting activity.
- If using a mouse or computer aggravates your pain change the arm you use your mouse with to the other side.
- Use an ice pack wrapped in a tea towel and place on your elbow for 25minutes up to a maximum of hourly, this will help to reduce the pain and inflammation in your elbow.
- Gently massage into your elbow and forearm to help relax and loosen the muscles.
- Take painkillers or anti-inflammatory medication. Visit your GP or pharmacist for advice or prescription of medication.
- Treatment by a qualified chartered physiotherapy can help you to reduce your pain and manage your condition affectively.
- Steroid injections and surgery are a last resort.

Prevention

- Use correct lifting techniques.
- Strengthening and stretching of the forearm extensors can help to reduce trauma and stress on activity.
- Reduce the repetitive strain placed on the forearm extensors.
- Take regular breaks at work..

Physiotherapy Treatment & Rehabilitation

Reduction of pain and swelling

Soft tissue massage, the use of ultrasound and mobilisation can reduce the pain and speed up tissue healing in the extensor tendons and forearm wrist extensor muscles.

Acupuncture can be used and is effective for pain relief and healing in tennis elbow.

Muscle conditioning

Strengthening is a crucial component of rehabilitation. Dependent on the extent of the injury a strengthening exercise programme can start as early as the first day after injury.

Muscle conditioning for tennis elbow involves strengthening the wrist extensors and flexors and shoulder biceps, triceps and rotator cuff.

Restoration of movement

A stretching programme combined with mobilisation can promote full range of movement.

Stretching involves mobilisation of the wrist extensor and flexor muscles.

Sport/ work Specific rehabilitation

Rehabilitation will include specific exercises to aid physical performance in sport and exercise.

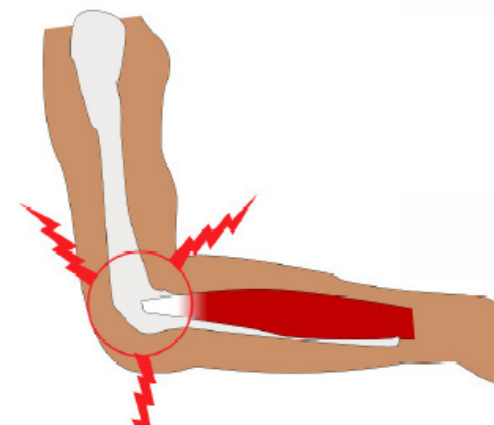
Proprioceptive, weight-bearing techniques are effective in reducing pain and returning to sport.

Information leaflet provided by



VCF PHYSIOTHERAPY
& SPORTS INJURY CLINIC

Tennis Elbow / Lateral Epicondylitis



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