

Dear Patient

# Tennis Elbow

Tennis Elbow (also known as lateral epicondylitis) is a common overuse injury causing pain on the outside of the elbow.

## WHO GETS IT ?

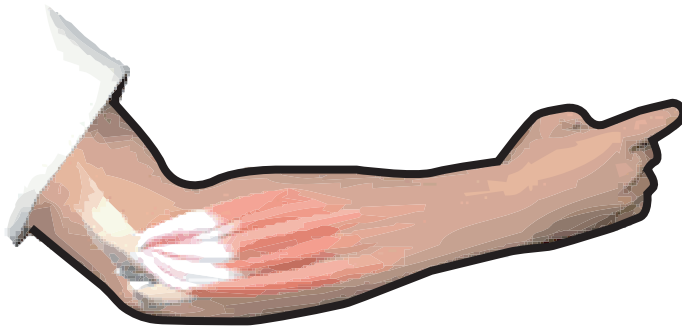
Anyone can develop tennis elbow. It most commonly occurs in people whose work, hobbies or sporting pursuits require repetitive use of the forearm muscles. Such activities include packing and stocking shelves, use of tools or vibrating equipment, work that involves gripping, and leisure activities such as sewing, knitting and tennis. The incidence of tennis elbow increases greatly in those over 40 years of age.

## ANATOMY

The muscles that "lift" the wrist, known as wrist extensors, are mostly commonly affected. These muscles attach to the outside of the elbow joint at the lateral epicondyle via a common tendon. It is at the attachment of the tendon where true tennis elbow pain is felt.

## WHAT GOES WRONG?

Tennis elbow is usually the result of repetitive overuse of the forearm muscles. Over time, fatigue and continued stress on the muscles may cause small tears to develop, resulting in pain and inflammation. The constant pull of the tendon on the bone also causes irritation and inflammation of the bony surface. This cycle of damage, pain and inflammation continues as the wrist extensors continue to be overworked.



Above: The wrist extensor muscles attach to the outside of the elbow at the lateral epicondyle.

## SYMPTOMS AND SIGNS

- Pain on the outside of the elbow which may extend into the forearm and occasionally into the wrist.
- Pain made worse with gripping, lifting, and moving the wrist.
- Pain may be aggravated by everyday activities like using a key, opening jars, shaking hands and carrying shopping bags.
- Pain is often relieved by rest initially but, as the condition progresses, the symptoms may become constant.

## TREATMENT

Initial treatment is aimed at reducing pain and inflammation using ICE for 15 minutes every 2-3 hours and rest from all aggravating activities. Physiotherapy treatment includes.

- acupuncture, electrotherapy, mobilisations, massage,
- strapping and bracing,
- stretches
- strengthening exercises, and
- education.

A variety of wrist and elbow braces are available for tennis elbow sufferers. In many instances these braces provide symptomatic relief by altering the forces acting on the tendon at its bony attachment. In cases where pain and inflammation are severe, a brace is unlikely to be of much assistance.

Generally, the longer a person has had the condition, the more extensive the damage. In some cases of unresolving tennis elbow, local cortisone injections may be necessary. And in more severe situations, surgery may be required.



Elbow braces may provide symptomatic relief for sufferers of Tennis Elbow

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