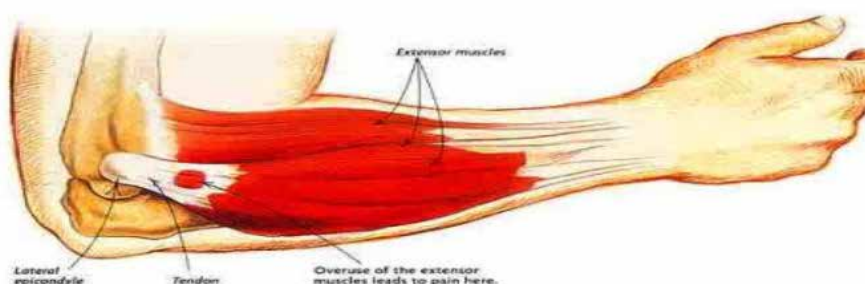


Tennis Elbow

The aim of this leaflet is to give you some understanding of the problems you have with your elbow and to provide some advice on how to manage this. It is not a substitute for professional health care advice and should be used along with information you may be given by your GP or AHP.

What is tennis elbow?

It is a problem with the tendons at the 'bony bump' on the outer side of your elbow. This 'bony bump' is called the lateral epicondyle. Tendons attach this bone to the muscles that move your wrist and fingers. The medical name for tennis elbow is lateral epicondylitis.



Causes

The exact cause of tennis elbow is not known, however it is thought to be an overuse problem. Repeated use of the muscles which lift your wrist up during gripping, pulling and lifting activities can cause damage or 'wear and tear' to the tendons. It is not only racquet sports which cause tennis elbow. Activities such as gardening and painting can also cause tennis elbow.

Symptoms

Tennis elbow causes pain and tenderness on the outside of your elbow, which may spread down your forearm.

The pain may be aggravated by lifting and gripping, even light objects such as a cup. You may also have difficulty fully bending or straightening your elbow due to pain.

Diagnosis

The main way that tennis elbow is diagnosed is through what you tell us and by examining your arm.

Other investigations may be considered, these can be discussed with your health care professional.

What are your treatment options?

The aim is to reduce the stress on the tendons so that your body can try to heal the area.

Self help

Pain relief medication or anti-inflammatories can help. It is recommended that you take your medication regularly. It is best to get advice from a GP or pharmacist.

Ice packs can be useful to reduce pain.

A brace or 'epicondylar clasp' may help. These are available from pharmacists or over the internet.

If possible, stop the particular activity that causes pain, or find a different way of doing it. For example;

- If you have to lift, do it with your palms up, not palms down
- Take work breaks
- Avoid forced, sustained or repetitive grips
- If you are involved in a sport or profession which requires repetitive movements, seek expert advice on your equipment and technique
- Exercises can help by stretching and strengthening muscles

Try these exercises. They should be relatively comfortable to do. If you have pain on a specific exercise that does not settle quickly, you should stop that exercise.

Exercise 1

Hold your arm straight out in front of you. Push down on the palm of your hand so you feel a stretch across the top of your forearm. Hold for 15 seconds. Repeat 3 times.

Do this 3 times a day.

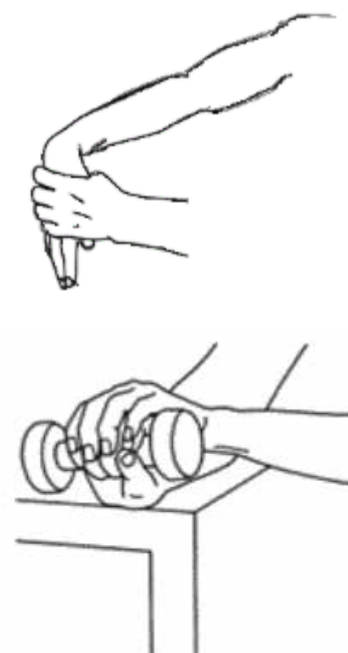
Exercise 2

Sit or stand. Support your forearm on a table with your palm facing down. Hold a small weight in your hand.

Bend your wrist up towards you assisting the movement with your other hand. Slowly lower your hand down without assistance from the other hand. Do 3 sets of 10, once a day.

Corticosteroid Injection

A corticosteroid injection may help ease the pain. This can be discussed with your health care professional.



Surgery

Surgery is rarely required. However, it may be offered if you have had severe pain for a long time, which has not responded to other treatments.

Try to stay positive. There is a lot you can do to help yourself. Most symptoms do settle with time.