

Your guide to Tennis Elbow

Information for patients, service users and carers

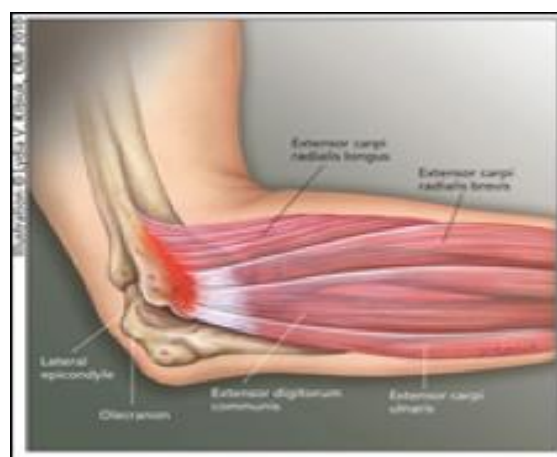
What is tennis elbow?

Tennis elbow, also known as Lateral Epicondylalgia is pain arising around the outside of the elbow. This pain is associated with overworking the muscles and tendons that straighten your wrist and fingers. It is now thought that tennis elbow does not involve inflammation but instead local muscle-tendon irritation related to overloading.

Repeated movement such as painting, cleaning and typing are a few examples of activities that may cause this condition to develop. The average duration of symptoms is between **6 months to two years**, nonetheless symptoms may persist for more or less time and recurrence is common. It is a **self-limiting condition**. It is important to note that although symptoms can be severe, the problem does resolve and symptoms will improve over time. **90% of patients will recover within one year.**

What are the symptoms?

- Painful to touch around the outside of your elbow
- Swelling on the outside of the elbow
- Pain radiating into the forearm
- Pain with use of the wrist, hand or arm e.g. opening jar, lifting boxes



What are the treatment options?

There is no one single treatment that has shown to cure tennis elbow, however there are several things you can do to try and help manage your symptoms. During the initial stage treatment will focus on pain relief and relative rest.

Activity Modification: Try to reduce or adapt any movements that may be causing your symptoms and avoid repetitive movements of the hand. An example would be lifting items with your palm up instead of down.

Ice: Use an Ice pack wrapped in a towel over the site of your elbow pain for no more than 20 minutes twice a day.

Medication: You can use analgesia for symptom relief, such as paracetamol or a topical nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID), such as ibuprofen gel. Speak to your local pharmacist for more advice on suitable medication.

Supportive device: A tennis elbow strap may help to relieve pain when using your arm. These can be found and bought in most pharmacies or online. Suggested suppliers are:

www.physique.co.uk

www.physioroom.com

Local pharmacies e.g. Boots, Lloyds

Local massage: Massaging the painful site on the outside of your elbow may help to reduce pain levels and loosen up any tightness.

Physiotherapy: An exercise programme from your physiotherapist may be one of the most effective ways of treating tennis elbow and improving pain and function. These exercises include stretching and strengthening exercises for the wrist and forearm extensors. Your physiotherapist may trial taping or Ultrasound therapy treatment if clinically indicated. A few exercises are listed on this sheet to help get you started.

Steroid Injection: A corticosteroid injection (CSI) may be considered to help with pain management and function and may provide short-term relief for severe pain. It is however unlikely to affect long-term outcome, and pain relapses are common.

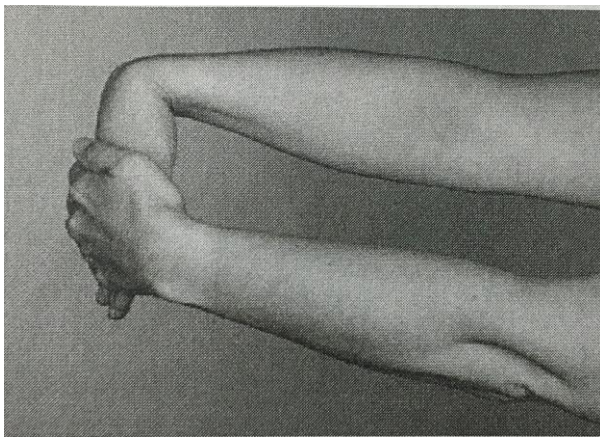
Physiotherapy Exercises

These exercises can be completed 2-3 times per day, until pain decreases. A low level of pain or discomfort when completing them is okay.

The key to treatment is to increase the strength of the tendons gradually, while avoiding any activity that overloads the tendons.

Wrist extensor stretch-

Standing or sitting keep elbow straight and bend your wrist forwards using your opposite hand. Hold this position for 20-30 seconds, repeat 3 times.



Wrist turn-

Keep elbow at 90 degrees supported on a table hold out your hand, palm up. Turn your wrist slowly so that your palm is now facing down. Hold for five seconds, and then slowly release. Do three sets of 10 repetitions. Progression- add light weight and repeat this movement.



Eccentric exercises-

With the sore arm supported on a table, lift your wrist up with unaffected hand. Then take the unaffected hand away and slowly lower. Repeat this process for each repetition. It should be performed for 3 sets of 15 repetitions. This exercise can be progressed with addition of hand weight as shown in picture. The technique remains the same. The progression is at discretion of physiotherapist but should only commence when current exercises programme is no longer painful.



If your symptoms do not start to improve within 6-8 weeks, you are able to self-refer to physiotherapy for an opinion and further help with management. It is advised to contact your GP surgery or Physiotherapist sooner if you develop any of the following:

- Red, hot or swollen elbow joint
- Tingling or numbness in hand
- Generally feeling unwell .

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