



# Tennis Elbow (Lateral elbow pain)

### What is tennis elbow?

Tennis elbow, also known as lateral epicondylitis, is a condition that results in pain around the outside of the elbow. This is often as a result of overuse of the muscles and tendons in the forearm. It may be due to certain sports or everyday activities especially if you do a lot of heavy or repetitive arm activities.



### Common symptoms

- Pain and tenderness on the outside of your elbow.
- Pain can also track down your forearm.
- Pain on repeated wrist movements, gripping activities or rotation of the arm.
- Difficulty in fully straightening your arm.

### How long will it last?

In most cases, tennis elbow will gradually improve. This is a process that can vary in time from weeks to several months in some cases. It is a self limiting condition – no-one ever has it forever. 90% of people are better after 1 year.

### What can I do to help myself?

- **Activity** - Continue your normal daily activities but do try to avoid any activities that aggravate your symptoms such as heavy lifting. Try and take regular breaks from activity, especially repetitive or sustained activities such as computer work.
- **Medication** – If you have been prescribed pain relief take this at regular intervals until the pain settles. Your GP can advise you on this.
- **Brace** – In some cases a tennis elbow brace or clasp may help. Your Physiotherapist or GP will be able to advise you.
- **Ice** – Try applying cold to the area for 8-10 minutes several times a day. Wrap ice in a towel before using to prevent burns to the skin.

### What are my treatment options?

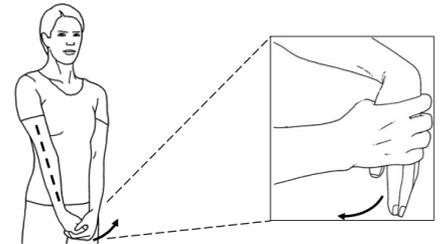
Treatment is usually non-operative, with only a very small proportion requiring surgery.

### Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy, activity modification and simple exercises will control the symptoms in most people. A physiotherapist can use a variety of treatments including exercises, stretches, manual therapy, electrotherapy, ice and elbow supports to help with your condition. Examples of exercises commonly used for this condition are below

### Stretches

- Hold your arm straight out in front of you and bend your wrist.
- Use your other hand to grasp the index and middle fingers, bending them towards the body.
- Hold the stretch for 30 seconds or longer, repeat more than 5 times daily.



### Eccentric exercises

Specific strengthening exercises have been shown to improve pain and function in people who have been diagnosed with chronic tennis elbow.<sup>1</sup> If done regularly they can help to resolve symptoms over eight to twelve weeks.<sup>2</sup> It is recommended that for the initial three weeks you have had symptoms you complete these exercises only three days a week. After three weeks of symptoms the frequency of these exercises should be increased to six days per week.<sup>3</sup> A small hand weight, dumbbell or preferably an exercise band can be used for these exercises.



Start by supporting the 'affected' forearm (with tennis elbow) on your knee with your wrist over the edge and your palm facing down. Fix the band firmly under your foot.

### Injection

A corticosteroid injection may be recommended if you have a particularly painful elbow which is making movement difficult. Injections are reserved for very resistant cases. It is important to note that an injection will only provide short term relief for the condition

### Surgery

An operation is only considered as a last resort. Surgery may be considered if conservative treatments are unsuccessful. The procedure could involve removal of the damaged part of the tendon.

