

Tennis Elbow

Tennis elbow is the common name for lateral epicondylitis and is a type of tendinopathy. Tennis elbow is a condition that causes pain, swelling, stiffness and weakness. It is thought to be caused by repeated stresses and tiny injuries to the tendon. These may occur for a number of reasons including overuse of the tendon. Treatment includes rest, ice packs, pain killers, and exercises to help to stretch and strengthen the tendon and related muscle groups.

What can I do to help?

Rest: It is usually best to try to carry out your normal activities in small amounts, you mustn't overdo it. You need to take things slowly, pace your activities and avoid movements that make your pain worse.

Heat or Ice: Applying an ice pack to your elbow may be helpful for reducing pain. A packet of frozen peas wrapped in a tea towel works well as an ice pack. Leave the peas in place for no more than 20 minutes at a time. This can be repeated several times a day.

Pain relief: Simple painkillers (like paracetamol) or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, NSAIDs, (like ibuprofen) are available over the counter and can be very effective but don't use them for more than 2 weeks without seeking medical advice.

If you are currently taking any form of medication it is advisable to consult your GP or pharmacist before taking additional pain relief.

Exercise: It is important to keep exercising a painful tendon in a non-painful way. This will help stimulate the tendon to become stronger and less painful in time. Exercise will also maintain the strength of the muscles attaching to your elbow.

Exercises to try:

Please try each one 10-15 times, 2-3 times a day. Some discomfort is normal as you may be moving muscles which are tight or stiff, however it is unhelpful if this pain continues for more than 30 minutes following your exercises. If this is the case, please reduce the distance you move or the duration of the hold. If your pain continues to worsen, please stop the exercises.



1. Wrist Extension



Sit with your forearm resting on a table and your hand off the edge, palm facing down.

Slowly lift your hand up then return to starting position.

This can be progressed using a weight.

2. Wrist Pronation and Supination



Sit with your shoulders relaxed, your elbow bent and your palm facing down.

Keeping your elbow tucked into your side, rotate your forearm so that your palm is facing the upwards then rotate your forearm so that your palm is facing the back down.

This can be progressed using a weight.

