

# TENNIS ELBOW

## ADVICE FOR PATIENTS

Are you experiencing continuous elbow pain? If so, it could be Tennis Elbow.

The medical term for Tennis Elbow is 'lateral epicondylitis.' This common problem is something we see a lot of in our practice - normally in middle aged patients - both male and female...and not all of whom play tennis!

Typically, it's an overuse condition caused by repetitive motion. That could include tennis and other racket sports, but the problem can also be caused by any activity that means the elbow is being used repeatedly.

Frequent causes include decorating or gardening or carrying out hobbies like crafting, painting, sewing or knitting which involve lots of gripping with the hands/fingers. Playing a string instrument

is another well-know cause.

In other cases it's possible to develop Tennis Elbow following trauma to the area, i.e. from a hitting it hard on something.

It presents itself as pain and/or swelling around the outside of the joint (If you're feeling pain on the inside of your elbow, it's more likely to be Golfers Elbow) and Tennis Elbow pain will sometimes continue down the arm towards the back of the hand when twisting, bending, straightening, gripping or lifting with the affected limb. You'll often experience stiffness and a decreased range of movement too.

Symptoms of Tennis Elbow can be mild or much more severe and can last just a couple of months or in some cases, a lot longer. So our advice would be to get it checked out.

# DIAGNOSIS & OUTLOOK

The bad news? Tennis Elbow can be really painful and can last for as long as a couple of years. The good news, though? The outlook is generally positive with 90% of individuals making a full recovery. Tennis Elbow is a tendon injury. Sometimes, it will go away on its own with time and rest and through sufferers avoiding the repetitive action that has caused the issue. You can also use a cold compress on the area to relieve pain.

In other instances it will need treatment and booking in for some physiotherapy will usually speed up your recovery time. Physio works well for Tennis Elbow and helps ease symptoms in the vast majority of cases.

When you come to our clinic for Tennis Elbow treatment we'll first ask you lots of questions about your symptoms and when they started. We'll want to understand how the injury has happened and whether there is an obvious underlying reason as to why you're experiencing symptoms. Tennis Elbow is normally something that gradually appears and worsens over a period of time, so we'll want to get a full history from you to cancel out other

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possible problems.

Next, we'll check for inflammation and areas of pain through carrying out some basic tests which will involve you moving your arm and hand in specific ways.

From gripping objects, to bending and fully extending your arm, we'll want to gain a deep understanding of the specific movements that trigger pain and discomfort in your elbow to ensure we're making an accurate diagnosis.

If we think further investigation is required we may consider a diagnostic ultrasound scan which will provide us with greater insight into your injury.

Once we're happy that your symptoms are pointing to Tennis Elbow, we may massage and manipulate the area, especially if you're experiencing stiffness in the joint and have a decreased range of motion.

Acupuncture is also sometimes useful in the treatment of Tennis Elbow and is something we can provide in clinic if we feel it will aid your recovery.

We also have a shockwave therapy machine at W5Physio and this treatment is known to have worked well in cases of Tennis Elbow.

# EXERCISES



Here are some exercises that can help with Tennis Elbow. Remember to carry them out carefully and to stop anything that causes additional pain.

**1.**

## **ISOMETRIC WRIST EXTENSION**

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Put your hand (palm down) and forearm flat on a table. Without lifting your wrist, flex your hand upwards and back. “push down and resist movement at the wrist, work to 7/10 effort (0 = no effort & 10 = max effort) and not above 4/10 pain (0 = no pain & 10 = severe pain). Do for 4 x 30 seconds, every other day.

**2.**

## **TRICEP EXTENSION IN STANDING**

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Stand tall. Hold a dumbbell with both hands directly above your head. Slowly flex your elbows and lower the weight behind your head, keeping your upper arms still. Extend your arms. Repeat.

**3.**

## **SINGLE ARM BICEP CURL**

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Stand with feet hip-width apart. With dumbbell in hand, palm facing forward and elbow tucked into your side, curl the dumbbell upwards, bending from elbow, until the dumbbell reaches your shoulder. Gently lower to start position and repeat.



# PREVENTION TIPS

Avoiding Tennis Elbow isn't always simple, and taking time out from repetitive actions you do as part of your every day life, either for work or as a hobby, can be easier said than done. But, there are some things to try at home:

- 1) Warm up and cool down properly before and after any form of activity. This is not only advisable for avoiding Tennis Elbow when playing tennis and other sports, but when carrying out any physical activity at home such as gardening, decorating, etc.
- 2) If you're already experiencing pain, discomfort or swelling in the elbow from a repetitive activity, avoid the activity until your symptoms have eased. Resting the affected elbow is the best way to aid recovery and prevent future occurrences of Tennis Elbow.
- 3) Carry out regular strength/resistance training of your arms and shoulders. Through strengthening all of the surrounding muscles you are less likely to experience problems such as Tennis Elbow. We can devise a bespoke exercise routine for you at W5Physio.
- 4) If you are experiencing stiffness or discomfort in the elbow try using a support. Bandaging the area at the first signs of a problem can help to avoid a full-blown occurrence of Tennis Elbow.
- 5) If your Tennis Elbow is from playing tennis (or another racket sport) get advice from a professional coach to ensure you're using the correct technique and that your racket grip is the correct size - too small a grip can cause over-gripping.

6) Here's some additional reading for further info :

[Physio First article on managing Tennis Elbow](#)

[Journal of Orthopaedic Sports Physical Therapy - Lateral Elbow Tendinopathy](#)

[Science Direct - Physiotherapy Management of Lateral Epicondylalgia](#)

If you suspect you're suffering with Tennis Elbow, book some time with us today.

**FOR MORE ADVICE OR TO BOOK A CONSULTATION, CONTACT W5PHYSIO:**