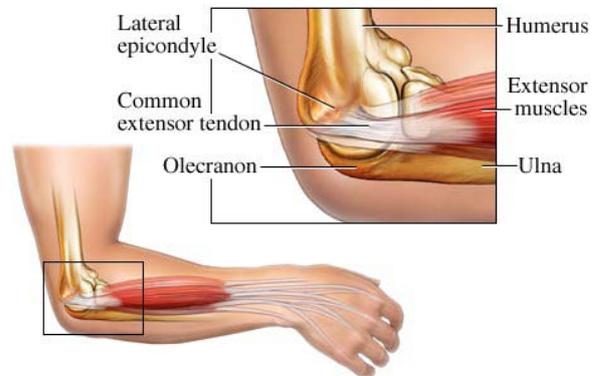


TENNIS ELBOW

What is Tennis Elbow

Tennis elbow, or *lateral epicondylalgia*, is associated with pain over the outside of the elbow (the lateral epicondyle) with activities involving gripping, lifting and repetitive or sustained hand and wrist movements. The average duration of symptoms is 6-24 months. The initial inflammatory response of the common extensor tendon fails to heal in a normal manner, resulting in degeneration of the tendon, changes in the nerve endings and muscle function. These changes may also be seen on the other non-painful side. The extensor muscles are used to stabilise the wrist during gripping/hand activities. Pain-free grip strength is reduced on the symptomatic

side by an average of 43-64%. Changes have also been shown in the speed and accuracy during hand/arm movements.



What are the Options for Treatment

A recent randomised controlled trial compared cortisone injection with physiotherapy intervention (advice, exercise, joint mobilisation) or “wait-and-see”. The group that received the cortisone injection had a rapid early reduction in pain, but by the end of the 12 month period had the highest levels of pain and recurrence rate (72%) compared with 9% in the “wait-and-see” group. Over the counter medication, hot or cold packs or forearm braces may be used for pain as needed and can be discussed with your physiotherapist.

What Movements Need to be Avoided

- Most strain is put on the wrist extensors when the elbow is straight, the palm turned down and the hand gripping. Avoid lifting objects in this position.
- Activities that increase your elbow pain, especially those that increase pain for longer than a few minutes should be avoided.
- Take regular breaks from repetitive gripping or manipulation of objects eg tools sue, typing or mouse use.
- The strongest and most efficient position for the wrist when performing activities with the hand is with the wrist slightly cocked back (ie “punch position”). Ensure your wrist does not “flop forward” when doing repetitive activities. People that habitually use this forward bent wrist position during gripping activities seem to be more prone to developing tennis elbow symptoms.