

Title: Tennis Elbow: Diagnosis and Treatment

Author: Nathan Waibel, MS4

Date: 9 September 2009

Key words: Tennis Elbow, Lateral Epicondylitis, Elbow Pain, Tendon Pain, Repetitive Use Injury

Abstract: Lateral epicondylitis, commonly referred to as tennis elbow, is pain located along the outside of the elbow. Patients commonly have pain or tenderness on the outside of the elbow either with pressing on the area or with resisted wrist extension (or with both). This pamphlet describes lateral epicondylitis, including diagnosis, treatment and prevention.

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How can I prevent it?

To prevent tennis elbow:

- Most importantly, warm up before playing tennis or doing activities that involve your elbow or arm muscles.
- Gently stretch your elbow and arm muscles before and after exercise.
- Use proper form during your activities. For instance, be sure your tennis racket has the proper size grip and that your tennis stroke is correct.
- Ice your elbow after exercise or work.
- In job-related activities, be sure your posture is correct. Make sure the position of your arms during your work doesn't cause overuse of your elbow or arm muscles.

For further information:

X-Plain.com
The Patient Education Institute
www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorials/tenniselbow/htm/lesson.htm

American Academy of Family Physicians
www.aafp.org/

Sports Medicine Advisor
University of Michigan Health System
www.med.umich.edu/1libr/sma/sma_index.htm



Developed by
Nathan Waibel, MS4

Tennis Elbow

➤➤➤ Diagnosis and Treatment



University of Minnesota Medical School
Family Medicine Clerkship
Patient Education Tool

Tennis Elbow

What is it?

Lateral epicondylitis, most commonly called tennis elbow, is an injury to tendons in your elbow. Tendons attach muscles to bone. The backhand swing in tennis can strain these tendons. Other repetitive activities like painting with a roller or using a screwdriver can as well.

There are several possible symptoms:

- Pain or tenderness on the outer side of the elbow
- Pain when you straighten or raise your wrist or hand
- Pain made worse by lifting a heavy object
- Pain when you make a fist, grip an object, shake hand, or turn door handles
- Pain that shoots from the elbow down into the forearm or up into the upper arm



How is it diagnosed?

Diagnosis is made with history and physical exam. Often there is pain or tenderness when pressure is applied to the tendons near the elbow. There is also usually pain on the outside of the elbow when extending the wrist (like revving a motorcycle) with resistance. X-rays are not necessary for the diagnosis, but may be taken in order to rule out other causes of elbow pain.



How is it treated?

The vast majority of cases are treated without surgery. For pain caused by acute inflammation of the tendon, you can try icing the painful area. You can also try anti-inflammatory medications like ibuprofen or naproxen. Some doctors may choose to give a cortisone injection as cortisone is a powerful anti-inflammatory. A tennis elbow strap may help decrease the pain. This strap

wraps around the forearm below the elbow. It acts like a new attachment site for the muscles and keeps them from pulling on the painful part of the elbow. After the acute inflammation is gone, heat may help decrease the pain. Once the pain is under control, the doctor will likely recommend you work with either a physical or occupational therapist. The therapist will use many different treatments including stretching and strengthening exercises. It may take many weeks to months for the pain to go away completely.

