

Tennis Elbow (Lateral Epicondylitis)

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What Is Tennis Elbow?

Tennis elbow is a common condition that causes pain on the outside of the elbow. It occurs when the tendons that help move your wrist and fingers become irritated from repetitive use or overloading. Despite its name, tennis elbow can affect anyone and is commonly seen in people who perform repetitive gripping, lifting, tool use, typing, yard work, or manual labor.

Common Symptoms

- Pain on the outside of the elbow
- Pain when gripping objects
- Pain when lifting, carrying, or shaking hands
- Weakness in the hand or forearm
- Increased pain when extending the wrist or fingers
- Difficulty performing everyday tasks such as opening jars or carrying groceries
- Symptoms often begin gradually and may worsen over time if the condition is not addressed.

What Causes Tennis Elbow?

Common causes include:

- Repetitive gripping activities
- Use of hand tools
- Racquet sports
- Repetitive lifting
- Computer and mouse use
- Occupational or recreational overuse

How Is It Diagnosed?

Diagnosis is usually based on your symptoms, medical history, and physical examination.

Most patients do not require imaging. X-rays, ultrasound, or MRI may be recommended if symptoms persist or if another condition is suspected.

Treatment

Treatment may include:

- Activity modification/Temporary reduction of aggravating activities
- Ice therapy

- Therapeutic exercises
- Stretching and strengthening programs
- Soft tissue treatment
- Bracing or a tennis elbow strap when appropriate
- Home exercise programs

Other Treatment Options

Additional treatments may include:

- Over-the-counter pain relievers
- Anti-inflammatory medications
- Cortisone injections
- Platelet-rich plasma (PRP) injections in selected cases

Surgery is rarely needed and is usually reserved for severe cases that do not improve after several months of conservative treatment. Most people improve with conservative treatment.

Prognosis

The outlook for tennis elbow is generally very good. Most people improve significantly with conservative care and proper activity modification. Recovery can take time, and symptoms may last several months. Following your treatment plan and home exercise program can help improve recovery and reduce the chance of recurrence.

Typical Duration of Care

- Approximately 10–14 visits over 8–12 weeks
- Continued home exercises and activity modification as needed

Recovery time varies depending on symptom severity, work demands, and participation in rehabilitation.

When to Seek Medical Attention

Contact your healthcare provider if you experience:

- Significant weakness in the arm or hand
- Severe swelling or deformity
- Loss of elbow motion