

Tennis Elbow (lateral epicondylitis)

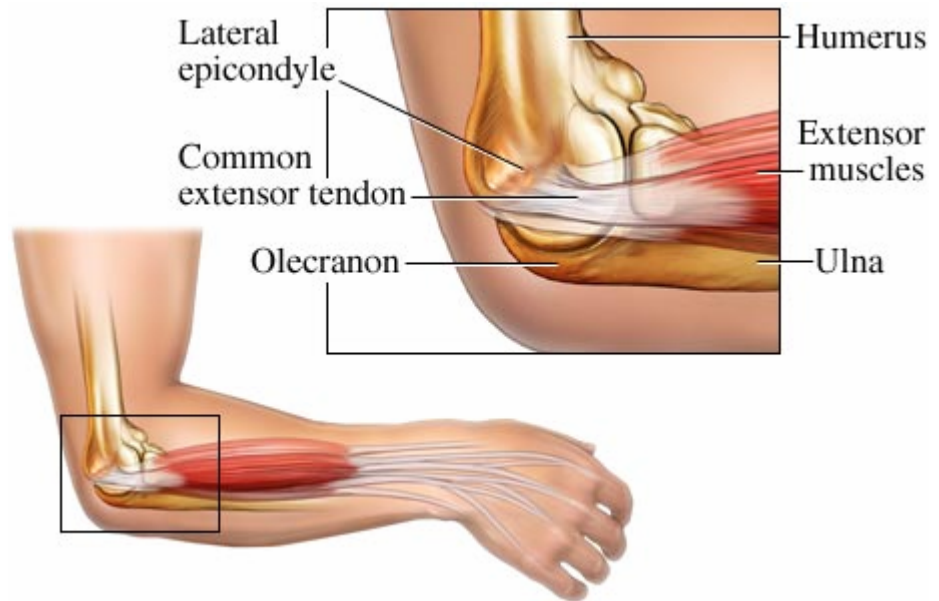
Elbow Anatomy

The elbow is a hinge joint connecting the upper arm bone (humerus) with the bones of the forearm (the radius and the ulna). It consists of three joints enclosed within a capsule and held together by muscles, tendons, and ligaments. Tendons are strong fibrous cords that attach muscles to bones. Ligaments are bandage-like sheaths of fibrous tissue that keep the joints and bones in alignment.

Common Elbow Ailments

Tennis elbow does not occur only in tennis players. In fact, whatever the activity involved, there's a potential for tennis elbow developing anytime you twist your elbow repeatedly so that the radius and the ulna (the lower arm bones) criss-cross each other.

This repetitive motion puts strain on the cartilage, ligaments, and tendons surrounding the elbow joint and can lead to swelling, inflammation, or tissue damage. Inflammation of the tendons, or tendinitis, is a common problem in these conditions.



The damage that tennis elbow incurs consists of tiny tears in a part of the tendon and in muscle coverings. After the initial injury heals, these areas often tear again, which can lead to bleeding and the formation of rough, granulated tissue and calcium deposits within the surrounding tissues. Collagen, a protein, leaks out from around the injured areas, causing inflammation. Tendons, which attach muscles to bones, do not receive the same amount of oxygen and blood that muscles do, so they heal more slowly. In fact, some cases of tennis elbow can last for years, though the inflammation usually subsides in 6 to 12 weeks.



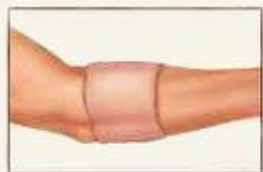
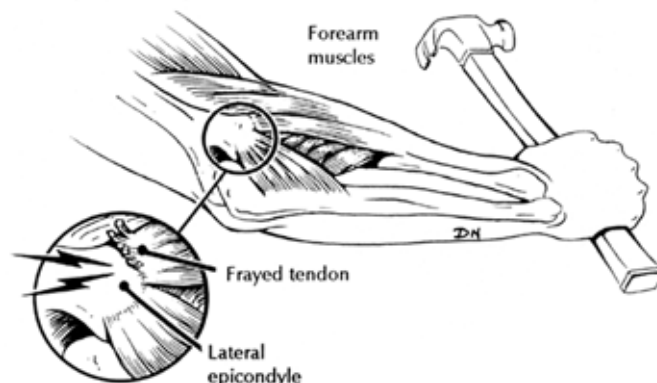
Medial Epicondyle (Golfer's elbow)

Pain felt on the inside of your elbow is called **golfer's elbow**. This injury is typically not as a result of a trauma to the elbow, but rather is a gradual onset type injury that occurs from repetitive movements and stresses to the elbow over a period of time. Golfers develop this condition frequently because of the movement that their elbows go through while playing. However, this injury is not limited to golfers and can affect a wide variety of individuals. Most common symptoms include pain on the inside of the elbow and possibly soreness in the forearm and wrist as well.

If you feel pain directly on the back of your elbow joint, rather than down the outside of your arm, you may have bursitis, which is caused when lubricating sacs in the joint become inflamed. If you see swelling, which is almost never a symptom of tennis elbow, you may want to investigate other possible conditions such as arthritis or gout.

Symptoms of Tennis Elbow

- Recurring pain on the outside of the upper forearm just below the bend of the elbow; occasionally, pain radiates down the arm toward the wrist.
- Pain caused by lifting or bending the arm or grasping even light objects such as a coffee cup.
- Difficulty extending the forearm fully (because of inflamed muscles, tendons and ligaments).
- Pins and needles and numbness in the forearm or hand and fingers can also arise.
- Pain that typically lasts for 6 to 12 weeks; the discomfort can continue for as little as 3 weeks or as long as several years.



Relief of Tennis Elbow

The best way to relieve tennis elbow is to stop doing anything that irritates your arm — a simple step for the weekend tennis player, but not as easy for the manual laborer, office worker, or professional athlete.

The most effective conventional and alternative treatments for tennis elbow have the same basic premise: rest the arm until the pain disappears, then massage to relieve stress and tension in the muscles, and exercise to strengthen the area and prevent re-injury. If you must go back to whatever caused the problem in the first place, be sure to warm up your arm for at least 5 to 10 minutes with gentle stretching and movement before starting any activity. Take frequent breaks.

What physiotherapy can do to help

- We use manual therapy to get the joints moving.
- We use massage and stretching to relieve the strain on nerve structures.
- We use massage and stretching to restore the balance between muscles.
- We use electrotherapy and/ or acupuncture to relieve pain and promote healing of damaged tissue.
- We advise on changes of technique in sports.
- We keep you as active as possible.
- We give you exercises to progressively strengthen the affected muscles.

Another option for the treatment of tennis elbow is a **cortisone injection**. Make an appointment with a **sport medicine physician** to discuss when this would be appropriate.