

## Tennis elbow

Tennis elbow ('Lateral Epicondylitis') is pain in the muscles and tendons on the outside of the arm around the elbow joint. The injury can occur in a single incident such as a blow to the arm. More commonly, it develops after overusing the affected arm.

**Home treatment** The priority is to rest the injured tendon by stopping or changing the activity causing the problem. To relieve symptoms you can:

**Apply an ice pack** - for a maximum of 20 minutes, up to 6 times/day. A bag of frozen peas wrapped in a damp cloth works well because it moulds to the shape of the arm. Ensure that the skin does not change colour (the sign of an ice burn). Applying a film of oil (cooking oil will do) to the skin before applying the pack helps to avoid burning the skin.

**Anti-inflammatory drugs** – used topically preferably – may help. EG Dicofenac gel, applied to the area 3-4 times daily. If necessary take ibuprofen tablets - according to the directions on the packet.. Avoid these if you have a history of indigestion or stomach ulcers, and possibly if you have asthma.

**Wear an arm brace** - available from larger pharmacies and sports shops. When doing a manual task you really cannot avoid, change the grip size; use a tool with a smaller grip. If available, contact your employer's occupational health advisers.

### Exercise & stretching

**STRETCH** - to reduce tension along the forearm/elbow muscles.

**Technique:** Warm up until you start to sweat, stretch to a gentle pull, and hold without bouncing for 20 seconds. Do 6-8 repetitions twice daily, 7 days per week.



#### **Backhand Stretch**

- Straighten your elbow.
- Grab the back of your hand with your other hand and pull down until you feel a stretch on the back of your forearm.



#### **Forehand Stretch**

- Straighten your elbow. Grasp your fingers with your other hand. Slowly pull your hand up and back until you feel a gentle stretch along the palm-side of your wrist and forearm.

**STRENGTHEN** - elbow muscles and tendons to prevent re-injury.

**Technique:** Must not cause elbow pain in the first two sets. If it does cause pain, wait one week and try again. Do three sets of ten repetitions, 5 days per week.



#### Backhand

- Sit with your injured elbow and palm down.
- Slowly bend your wrist up as far as possible.
- Hold for two counts, and then slowly lower.
- Start with no weight, if not painful, try one pound.



#### Wrist Rotation

- Sit with your elbow straight, forearm resting on your knee.
- Hold 1-2 pounds.
- Slowly rotate you palm down, and then up.



#### Thumb Up

- Sit with you injured elbow straight, forearm resting on your knee and thumb up.
- Slowly bend your wrist up as far as possible.
- Hold for two counts, and then slowly lower.
- Start with no weight, if not painful, try one pound.

If you have persisting symptoms beyond 3 weeks of the above regime, or have tingling in your arm or other symptoms, you should **see a doctor**, in order to confirm the diagnosis and advise on further treatment. Other therapies are available. Physiotherapy may also be advised.