Tennis Elbow – Lateral Epicondylitis

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# What is Tennis Elbow?

Tennis elbow affects the outside of the elbow causing pain at the bony prominence of the elbow, the lateral epicondylitis. Pain happens when there is injury or inflammation in the tendon that attaches the muscle to bone. The pain is usually felt when you pick-up or grip something, or twist or turn your hand, but it can hurt more often even while at rest. Although injury can cause pain and inflammation in the elbow, it can also be caused by overuse. Repetitive actions such as playing games like tennis, painting, typing, writing, or using a screwdriver. Any activity that repeatedly extends the arm and twist the hand or forearm can irritate the tendon causing pain, swelling, and tenderness.

# What are the treatments for Tennis Elbow?

A doctor can easily diagnose tennis elbow by your symptoms and an examination. He will feel for tenderness and warmth and there are simple movement test your doctor can do to help confirm a diagnosis. The doctor may also take an x-ray or do other test to rule out a fracture or other injury.

### Conservative Care

When diagnosed and treated early, tennis elbow can respond well to conservative treatment. This usually includes rest, ice to combat swelling, and over the counter anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs) like ibuprofen or naproxen. Your doctor may also recommend a tennis elbow brace which helps to relieve the stress on the tendon. Continued pain may require a referral to hand therapy and/or a stronger anti-inflammatory like a cortisone injection. A therapist will provide treatments that promote healing and reduce pain, provide gentle stretching and strengthening of the elbow, forearm, and wrist, and provide techniques and tips to prevent further occurrences.

# Surgical Care

Conservative treatment usually works, but if pain persists a nerve may be pinched or there may be another cause. Your doctor may order test or suggest surgery.