

Overview

Tennis elbow

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Tennis elbow is a condition that causes pain around the outside of the elbow.

It's also known as lateral epicondylitis.

It often happens after overuse or repeated action of the muscles of the forearm, near the elbow joint.

You may notice pain on the outside of the elbow.

The pain may travel down the forearm when:

- lifting or bending your arm
- when gripping small objects, such as a pen
- when twisting your forearm, such as turning a door handle or opening a jar

It may be difficult to fully extend your arm.

Find out more about the [symptoms of tennis elbow](#)

Causes of tennis elbow

Tennis elbow is usually caused by overusing the muscles attached to your elbow that are used to straighten your wrist. If the muscles are strained, tiny tears and inflammation can develop near the bony lump on the outside of your elbow.

Tennis elbow is sometimes caused by playing tennis. But any activity that puts repeated stress on the elbow joint can cause it.

Read more about the [causes of tennis elbow](#)

Pain that occurs on the inner side of the elbow is known as golfer's elbow.

When to contact your GP

Avoid the activity that is causing the pain until your symptoms improve.

If the pain in your elbow does not go away after a few days of rest, contact your GP.

Your GP will check for swelling and tenderness. They will do some simple tests. These include stretching out your fingers and flexing your wrist while your elbow is stretched out.

Your GP might do more tests if they think there is nerve damage. These might include an [ultrasound scan](#) or an MRI scan.

Treating tennis elbow

Tennis elbow will get better without treatment. But there are treatments that may improve symptoms and speed up recovery.

Rest your injured arm and stop any activity that's causing the problem.

Holding a cold compress against your elbow for a few minutes several times a day can help ease the pain. You can use a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a towel.

Taking painkillers can help. Paracetamol can help reduce pain. Ibuprofen can help reduce inflammation.

Physiotherapy may be recommended in more severe cases.

Surgery may be used as a last resort to remove the damaged part of the tendon.

Tennis elbow can last between 6 months to 2 years. A full recovery is made within 1 year in 9 out of 10 cases.

Find out more about [how to treat tennis elbow](#)

Preventing tennis elbow

It is not always easy to avoid getting tennis elbow. Not putting too much stress on the muscles surrounding your elbow will help stop it from getting worse.

If your tennis elbow is caused by a sport, changing your technique may help the problem.

Find out more about [preventing tennis elbow](#)

Risk of tennis elbow

Tennis elbow is a common condition.

It's the most common cause of persistent elbow pain. It affects women and men equally. Those affected are mostly between the ages of 35 to 54.

Sláintecare.

This project has received funding from the Government of Ireland's Sláintecare Integration Fund 2019 under Grant Agreement Number 123.

Page last reviewed: 21 March 2021

Next review due: 21 March 2024

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