



Lateral Epicondylitis

Definition: Lateral epicondylitis is an overuse injury involving the muscles that attach to the outside of the elbow. These muscles help to straighten or extend the wrist and fingers and help rotate the forearm.

Common Terms: Lateral epicondylitis is also known as “tennis elbow”.

Typical Mechanism of Injury: The mechanism of injury usually involves repeated stress to the large muscle group on the outside of the elbow and forearm. These muscles can also suffer small tears caused by improper technique or muscle weakness. Examples include using poor form when hitting a tennis backhand, repetitive use of a hammer or screwdriver, repetitive gripping and excessive typing on a keyboard.

Common Signs and Symptoms: Signs and symptoms include tenderness on the outer bony part of the elbow, morning stiffness with persistent aching, forearm soreness, or an increase in pain with gripping or holding objects.

Common Treatment: Treatment includes ice, rest, anti inflammatory medicine, and avoidance of specific activities that aggravate the symptoms. Exercises designed to increase flexibility and strength is usually recommended. In some cases, a small elbow brace or splint may be advised to reduce pressure on the irritated tendon. A night splint is also used in some cases. It is important to pick up objects with an underhand grip (palm up) until symptoms decrease.

Prevention: Prevention involves easing into repetitive activity around the house or at work and continuing exercises for strength and flexibility even after the pain goes away. Other considerations may include adjusting racquet size and/or string tension, adjusting grip size, assessing for correct technique, and checking racquet material. Evaluation of other recreational or repetitive activities is also important.

Expectations: A person usually responds to basic adjustments made to successfully manage this condition. However, without careful attention to the causes, it is possible that a recurrence of the condition may arise.

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