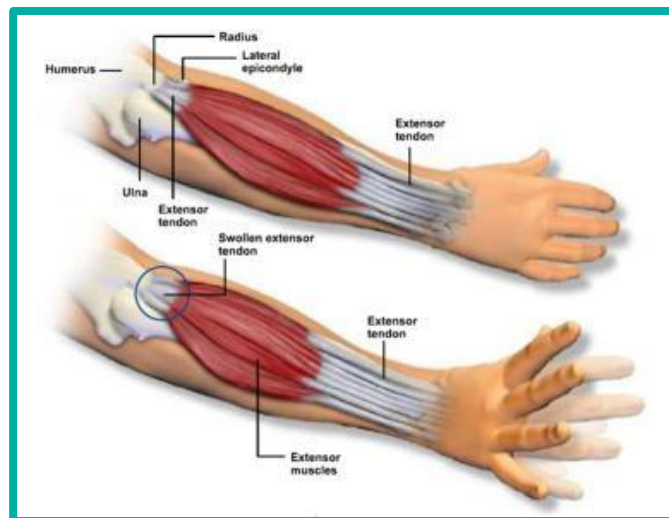


Lateral Epicondylitis Information & Exercise

Tennis Elbow

Tennis elbow (also known as lateral epicondylitis) is a soft tissue injury affecting the tendons attaching at the outer aspect of the elbow.

The tendons involved attach the wrist and finger extensor muscles to the bony part of your elbow (the lateral epicondyle).



Causes

Tennis elbow is a soft tissue which can be caused by;

- Repetitive strain - occupational repetitive work such as construction work or assembly line work
- One off stress/injury - lifting an excessive weight
- Degenerative (or ageing) changes in the tendon itself.

Symptoms

Pain is normally on the outside aspect of the forearm near to the bony part of the joint (the lateral epicondyle). This pain can spread into the muscles of the forearm, there may also be some heat and swelling particularly in the early stages.

Symptoms can start without a known cause over a gradual period of time, or after an increase in an activity involving the forearm muscles or following a specific event as described above.

Pain may be worse with activities involving the forearm muscles:

- Shaking hands
- Lifting bags
- Shaving
- Gripping activities

Management

Rest and reducing/modifying activities that aggravate your symptoms however try not to stop using the arm altogether, keeping it mobile to stop your joints becoming stiff is important.

If your employment has access to an Occupational health department speak to them about ways to modify your work or any activities that are exacerbating your symptoms.

A gradual strengthening programme as described below will improve the strength and structure of your tendon and help promote healing

Prognosis

With the correct treatment pain will normally improve over 6-12 weeks. If your symptoms persist please speak with your GP or Physiotherapist.

Pain & Symptom Management

Pain Relief

Over the counter pain relief medication can be used to reduce your pain so you can be more active or complete your exercises.

All medications have side effects and must be used carefully. Paracetamol and ibuprofen are the most common over the counter pain killers. However, some medical conditions will prevent you from taking them so, you should always check with your GP or Pharmacist to ensure they are safe for you.

If you decide to take pain medication it is important to take them at the recommended dose and to take them regularly to prevent a flare up of your symptoms and allow you to remain active and continue exercising.

Don't wait until your pain is severe before taking the pain killers as they won't work as well.

Ice/Heat

Using Ice to cool or Heat to warm the painful area can be helpful in managing pain, swelling and help the healing process. The smaller the body area the less time you will need to keep the ice or heat on. Start with 5 minutes but no more than 15/20 minutes per body part.

Use a damp towel between yourself and ice to prevent any cold burns. Use a dry towel between yourself and the heat to prevent heat burns. Regularly check your skin while using ice or heat and remove immediately if any burns or injury occurs. Only use heat/ice if your skin sensation is normal.

Use Ice for Pain relief or after activity/exercise.
Use heat for pain relief or before activity/exercise.

Epicondylar Clasp

Sometimes wearing an epicondylar clasp to support the tendon at its attachment or a wrist support to reduce wrist movements can help for certain activities that aggravate the symptoms.

Corticosteroid injection

If your symptoms are severe, or not improving after trying the previous advice AND exercises then you may be offered a corticosteroid injection. This can help to ease the pain, making physiotherapy more comfortable for you.

A corticosteroid will only reduce your pain therefore it is important to re-start your exercises usually after 2 weeks to gain the full benefits from this treatment option.

Some individuals may not be able to receive this treatment due to their current health or types of medicines they are already taking.

Exercise

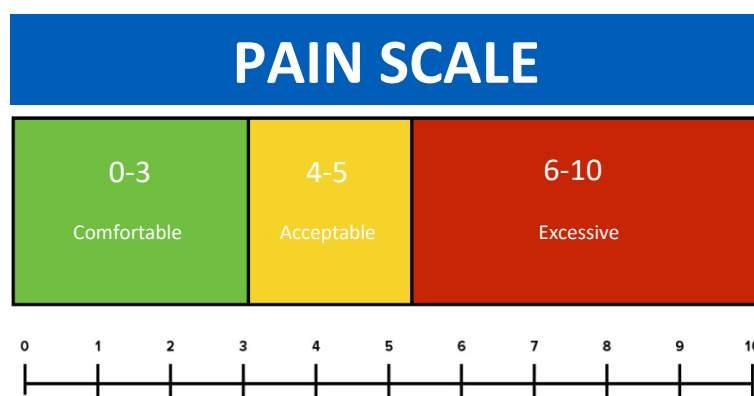
Complete these exercises every other day. That way your tendon has a recovery day to respond to the load placed on it the day before.

Pain during exercises should be manageable. Aim to stay within the green and amber zones. If experiencing excessive pain then you can modify the exercise, and then slowly build it back up over time;

- Reduce the range of movement
- Reduce repetitions
- Reduce the resistance/weight being used
- Slower, less intensity and control the movement more
- Increase the rest between each set of exercises

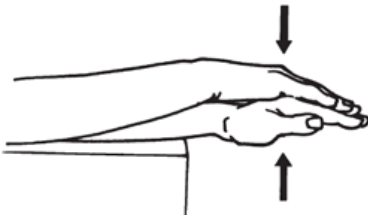
Progress onto the next stage of exercise once they become easier and you can fully complete the exercises in the comfortable zone of the pain scale.

- Pain after exercise should settle to your pre exercise levels within 30-60 minutes.
- Pain or stiffness due to exercise in the next morning should not last longer than 60 minutes.
- Use your pain relief, ice/heat or anything else you have found that eases your symptoms to help manage.



Stage 1

Isometric Wrist Extension



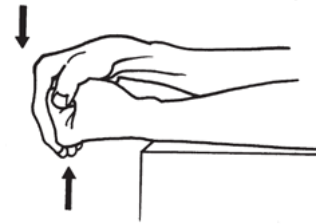
Resist your fingers into extension until you feel a tension using the opposite hand to resist against, hold the pressure. Relax and repeat.

Hold for 20-30 seconds | Repeat 3-4 times.

Isometric Wrist Flexion

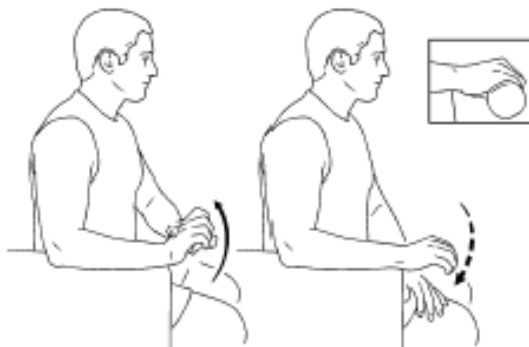
Resist your hand and wrist into extension using the opposite hand to resist against, hold the pressure. Relax and Repeat.

Hold for 20-30 seconds | Repeat 3-4 times.



Stage 2

Wrist Extension



Support your forearm with your hand hanging over the edge of a table or arm rest. Using your opposite arm lift your hand to an upward position (wrist extension). Then slowly lower it without support but using the muscles at your forearm to control the movement. Do this to a count of 5 seconds. Assist the wrist back to the start position.

Repeat 10 times | Perform 2-3 times

Stage 3

Resisted Wrist Extension

The exercise is the same as the one before, but now increase the resistance by using a small weight (1.5 kg to 3 kg). This can be any household object that is safe to use. Use the opposite hand to lift the hand holding the weight up. Then slowly lower the hand with the weight again. Do this to a count of five seconds.

