

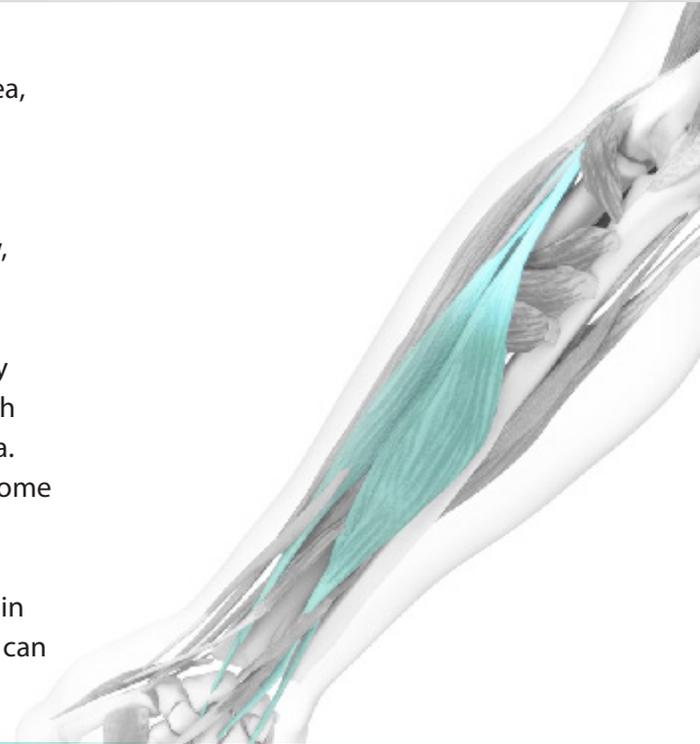
Tennis Elbow

Lateral epicondylalgia, better known as tennis elbow, is an over-use injury of the tendons around the outside of your elbow. It tends to occur as a reaction to an increased demand on the tendon beyond its capabilities. Those with tennis elbow will typically report pain and stiffness, which may reduce in the short term with brief gentle movement.

The common extensor tendon and tissues around this area, typically cause the pain from tennis elbow. This tendon attaches the muscles on the outer side of your forearm, responsible for lifting your wrist and straightening your fingers, to the bone you feel on the outside of your elbow, called the lateral epicondyle.

Contrary to what the name implies, you don't have to play tennis to get tennis elbow. Day to day repetitive tasks such as carrying heavy bags or hammering can irritate this area. Activities such as opening jars, doors, and typing can become problematic.

Like other tendon problems, tennis elbow can be treated in much the same way. Recognising the early warning signs can stop it turning into a long standing, chronic problem.



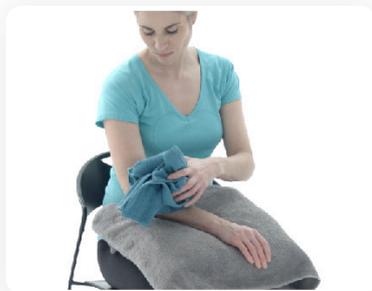
First and foremost, you must reduce the activities that irritate your tendon. If stress continues to be placed on the tissues, the tendon will become more and more irritated. Find ways to modify day to day tasks such as opening a jar with the other hand using a cloth, and carrying your shopping on your forearm.

Improving blood flow to the area can help to stimulate the healing process. Place a hot water bottle over your forearm to reduce the stiffness you feel when the tendon has not been used for some time.

Massage around the tendon can also help with circulatory flow. Start gently, then increase the pressure as the tissues begin to warm up. Once the tissues are warmed, apply more pressure, rubbing across the tendon. An anti-inflammatory gel can be used in isolation, or as a combination with these massage techniques.

Heat and massage should only be used on a stiff, cold tendon, and NOT when the tendon is irritated after too much activity.

If the tendon has been irritated, help to settle it by wrapping some ice in a damp towel, and positioning it around the outside of your elbow for 10-15 minutes. This will help to settle any irritation. Monitor your skin to ensure the ice does not burn.



There are various supports you can buy for tennis elbow. Whilst they are an excellent additional treatment, you should only wear your support during provocative activities.

If your pain is irritated by work, speak to your employer about changing your work station set up.

With perseverance, over time your symptoms should reduce in intensity. This may take anything from a week, to a month depending on the severity of your tendon pain and how long you have had it. It is important to increase your movement with exercises and help build strength back into your tendon. Your clinician will guide you through the specific exercises which are often best done little and often throughout the day to avoid provoking your pain too much.