

Tennis & Golfer's elbow pain

Your GP or Physiotherapist may have diagnosed you with '*Tennis Elbow*' or '*Golfers Elbow*'. This is sometimes referred to '*Lateral Epicondylagia*' or '*Medial Epicondylagia*' but essentially means the same thing.

The difference between the two diagnoses depends on the location on the elbow in which you experience your symptoms. '*Tennis / Lateral*' refers to the outer aspect of the elbow, where '*Golfer's / Medial*' refers to the inner aspect of the elbow. The onset of your symptoms may be a result of a change in load or overuse particularly at the wrist joint.

Both conditions are relatively common diagnoses at the elbow joint and can be effectively self-managed with simple advice and exercises. The vast majority all settle given enough time and a gradual/incremental loading programme over a course of 3-6 months. You will find it will likely take 5-6 weeks before you start to see improvements. If not; it is best to see your Physiotherapist again or simply self-refer through our online service.

What can I do to help?

If you are struggling with the intermittent pain, the following advice should help you to get started:

Pain relief: Basic painkillers (like paracetamol) or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory gels (such as Ibuleve) are easily available over the counter without the need for prescription. These can be very effective as they lessen your discomfort and importantly allow you to keep your arm moving. However, please check the labels for instructions/safe usage and any possible reasons why you should not use them. If you are currently taking any form of medication it is advisable to consult your GP or pharmacist before taking additional pain tablets.

Heat or Ice: You may find it therapeutic to use an ice pack to ease your pain/irritation. A packet of frozen peas wrapped in a tea-towel works well. Leave in place for up to 15 minutes at a time. Again, this can be repeated several times a day if found helpful.

Rest vs. activity: It is usually best to carry out your normal activities, but try not to overdo it. Let pain be your guide; short-lasting/temporary discomfort is fine but worsening or constant 24/7 pain indicates you are likely doing too much and need to take things a little easier. You need to pace yourself to start with and try to do a bit more each few days. You will find keeping your arm gently moving more comfortable than complete rest. Little by little you should slowly notice that you can start to do more and more with your elbow as it becomes increasingly tolerant to loading through the following gradual exercise programme:

Exercise

As with many musculoskeletal conditions, exercise is the very best way to manage your symptoms as you look to gradually build the capacity and load tolerance of the affected tendon(s). This takes time.

Aim to perform this exercise 1-2x a daily. It is advised that you continue this exercise programme for a course of 3-6 months. You are aiming for a small increase in pain that goes away within 30 minutes and not worse the next day. If you happen to find it too sore afterwards; don't worry, do fewer repetitions the next time and then gradually build up again as tolerated. It will likely take 5-6 weeks before you start to see improvement and it may take longer before you are back to all your normal daily activities.

If your elbow pain does not start to improve over the next 5-6 weeks, or gets worse despite the exercises, then contact your Physiotherapist or simply self-refer yourself on our online service for an assessment.

Exercise 1a - Wrist Extension Curls (For Tennis Elbow)

With your forearm rested over the edge of a table with your palm down to the floor

Curl your wrist upwards and slowly return to the start position, without weight to begin

Perform 1-2 sets of 10-20 repetitions

Start using a light weight once easily tolerated



Exercise 1b - Wrist Flexion Curls (For Golfer's Elbow)

With your forearm rested over the edge of a table with your palm facing upwards

Curl your wrist upwards and slowly return to the start position, without weight to begin

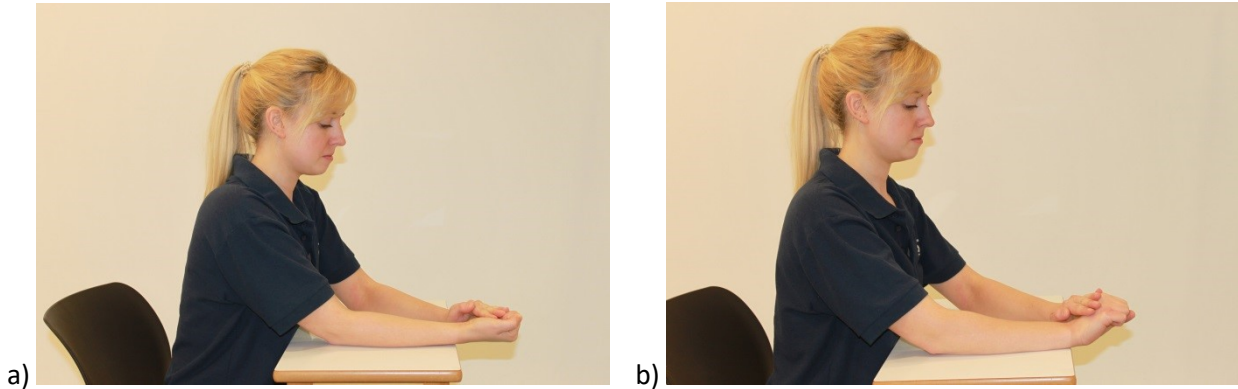
Perform 1-2 sets of 10-20 repetitions

Start using a light weight once easily tolerated



If you find these loading exercises too irritable- you can do this following exercise instead:

Sit with the forearm support but wrist off the edge of a table or your lap



a) **For Golfer's (medial elbow) pain** – have the palm of the troubled arm facing upwards to the sky

b) **For Tennis (lateral elbow) pain** – have your palm of the troubled arm facing downwards

Push lightly into your other hand for 15 seconds

Rest for 1min before repeated another 3-4 times in a single set

Repeat the set 2-3 x daily

It is important to push gentle enough that the exercise is completely comfortable and does not cause any lasting discomfort once you have finished

As you improve you can gradually start to push firmer or longer but only as easily tolerated. Eventually move back to performing Exercise 1 a/b using light weights when you feel the static pushes are too easy

Exercise 2 – Forearm Stretches

For some people it is also helpful to stretch the forearm muscles that connect into the elbow

You can perform either of these two exercises below if you find it helpful. For each exercise, keep the elbow comfortably straight and apply the tension through the wrist/hand with the other hand.

Hold each for 30 seconds

