

## Tennis Elbow (Lateral Epicondylitis)



### What is Tennis Elbow?

Tennis elbow refers to pain in the muscular area at the outer portion of the elbow that develops from sudden increased use or overuse of the elbow. These muscles control the tendons in the back of the forearm and hand. They are responsible for straightening the fingers and pulling the hand backwards into a “stop” position.

The term ‘tennis elbow’ is used because it commonly occurs in people who play tennis or other racket sports. Other people who are frequently affected include manual labourers that regularly using hand-held tools, however this condition can affect just about anyone in the general population.

While tennis elbow was originally thought to be inflammation of the muscles or tendons, current research suggests that it is more likely to be due to the breakdown of the tissues in the area as a result of increased stress or tension in the muscles.

### What are the signs and symptoms of Tennis Elbow?

Tennis elbow can come on either suddenly, or develop gradually over time. The pain may begin with activity and quickly go away following activity in the early stages. As it progresses, it may be painful before and after activity, but ease while in use.

Other symptoms can include pain overnight, stiffness in the elbow or forearm, and progression of pain through the forearm. Occasionally pins and needles and numbness might occur.

A common complaint among tennis elbow sufferers is pain while gripping an object or making a fist. This is because during these activities, the affected muscles are working. Because of this, grip strength may gradually weaken over time to a point where gripping objects becomes an impossible task. This can limit normal daily activities such as writing or driving.

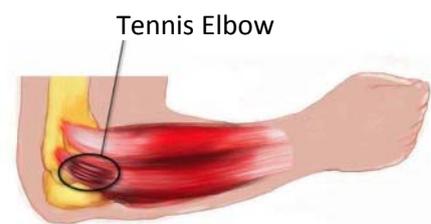
### How can Physio help?

Your physio will assess the affected muscle group to determine the extent of the condition. You will experience muscle stretching and strength testing, and likely a grip strength test. Your arm’s sensation and overall joint range of movement in the wrist, elbow and shoulder will be assessed as well.

Following assessment, you will be treated with multiple modalities including massage, ultrasound, muscle strengthening and stretching, and joint range of movement exercises.

A fact that some people find surprising is that posture can also play a role in the treatment of this condition. Depending on the cause of your tennis elbow, your physio may suggest a change in the setup of your desk, workplace, or grip technique of your racket or hand-held tool.

It is normal for tennis elbow to take a few weeks or even months to heal. If conservative management is not having a good effect, your physio can help you speak to your doctor about other management techniques. As tennis elbow is a progressive condition that generally does not resolve on its own, it is recommended to seek treatment sooner rather than later, as recovery is much faster when started early.



**None of the information in this newsletter is a replacement for proper medical advice. Always see a medical professional for assessment of your individual condition.**