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Tennis Elbow

This complaint is common with tennis players, hence the name. Yet all people can and do suffer from tennis elbow at some stage of their lives. People who are particularly vulnerable are people who work in active occupations and who use their hands and arms (machinists, signwriters, painters, computer operators and builders).

What to look for...

- A type of pain that occurs below the elbow on the upper forearm.
- You suffer pain when lifting or bending the arm or even when you try to pick up any objects.
- Pain that typically lasts for 6 to 12 weeks; the discomfort can continue for as little as 3 weeks or as long as several years.

Causes

Tennis elbow is caused by grasping, twisting, snapping, or lifting objects while the wrist is extended backwards. Some tennis players tend to use their wrist to angle onto the ball. This is not advisable and puts stress on the tendon on the outside of the elbow. Care should be taken when lifting heavy objects as tennis elbow can often occur at these times, especially when the elbow locks into place with the arm extended.

Traditional Treatments

It is important to stop using the elbow and the arm in the way you have been doing. This means to stop doing the activity that is causing the pain or to be especially careful in how you perform the task. It is usually advisable to rest the arm for as long as possible so the tendon and muscle soreness can heal. Massage is often helpful to reduce tension in your muscles.

If the task/activity is unavoidable, ensure that your warm up your arm muscles adequately before resuming the activity and take breaks frequently.

You may wish to visit your pharmacy or doctor to discuss other options and treatments, but resting the arm for a period of time and finding an alternative way of handling the activity is important.

At-Home Remedies

- Replacing your lost fluids by drinking lots of filtered water.
- Ice packs reduce swelling.
- To relieve cramping, elevate the affected area to direct blood flow toward the heart. Gently stretching the muscle will usually stop a cramp. (See also muscle cramps).
- A nice hot bath with your favourite aromatherapy oils can do wonders for tired and sore muscles.
- Rest, ice, compression and elevation are vital for most sports injuries.

Prevention

- Always lift objects appropriately - ask your health care practitioner the correct method.
- Use light weights to strengthen your hand and arm muscles.
- Stretch relevant muscles before beginning an activity you know may potentially harm you. Do this by turning inwards the top of your fingers and gently but firmly pulling them toward your body into your palm.
- Stop or modify the action that is causing the problem. If you have to continue, always warm up for 10 minutes or more beforehand. Take frequent breaks.

When to Seek Further Professional Advice

- You notice any of the symptoms listed above.