

Your Injury

Tennis elbow (lateral epicondylitis) is an inflammation of the outer elbow where the tendon attaches to the bone. It is caused by the repetitive movements and the gripping actions common in tennis hence the term 'tennis' elbow. However it may also occur in other activities requiring repetitive gripping actions. Lateral epicondylitis affects 40-50% of recreational tennis players, most often those over the age of 30. Unfortunately rest as a treatment is rarely helpful.

Warm up and Warm down

When injured it is particularly important that you warm up with a brisk walk for 3-4 minutes before you start any exercises. This increases your circulation and helps prepare your muscles for the activity to come. This is just as important whether your injury is to the upper or lower limb.

When you have finished your exercises, it is also important to allow your heart rate to slow down gradually by ending the session with a gentle walk for 3-4 minutes.

Factors contributing to tennis elbow:

- Age 30+
- Frequency of play.
- Force and flexibility of forearm extension, i.e. tightness of grip.
- Poor exercise technique.
- Poor posture when working at a computer.

Prevention

There are modifications you can make to your exercise technique and work stations to help reduce the risk of your tennis elbow injury recurring.

When you think you have tennis elbow:

1. Do not return to the activity responsible until you have sought medical advice.
2. Ice the elbow using a bag of peas or ice pack wrapped in a damp towel. Apply the ice over the affected area for five minutes. Repeat every 15 minutes if possible.
3. Seek advice from the Medical Officer with regards to medication.
4. Physiotherapy can help with stretching exercises.
5. Injections should be considered if you have already undergone a full course of treatment to no avail. In this instance you are more likely to obtain a longer lasting result from injection.
6. Surgery can be carried out under local injection (subcutaneous tenotomy) with a 95% success rate and no deficiency in grip strength. (The scar is usually almost invisible).