

Patient information

Tennis elbow (lateral elbow pain)

Barts Health Physiotherapy Website:

www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/physiotherapy



What is tennis elbow?

Tennis elbow is a painful condition which affects the outside of the elbow. It is common with repetitive or over-use of the forearm muscles. (Note – not everyone that has this condition plays tennis.)

What causes tennis elbow?

It is thought that overuse of the forearm muscles leads to pain on the outside of the elbow. Sometimes this can lead to changes in the shape and structure of the tendon that attaches to the bone on the outside of the elbow.

What are the symptoms?

- Pain on the outside of the elbow
- Pain in the forearm muscles
- Pain with:
 - Lifting or Carrying e.g. shopping bags
 - Chopping or stirring
 - Racket sports e.g. tennis, badminton
 - Opening jars
 - Typing

What can help my elbow pain get better?

- If possible, try to reduce or stop the movements that make the pain worse
- Using ice or heat may help settle the pain for a short time.
 - Ice - place an ice pack or a bag of frozen peas inside a damp towel. Place on the elbow area for 10-20. Repeat as often as you need
 - Heat – use a hot pack or hot water bottle on the elbow for 10-20 minutes. Always place a towel over your skin so you don't burn yourself.
- Pain Killers like Paracetamol or Ibuprofen. Ask your pharmacist if you are unsure what to take.

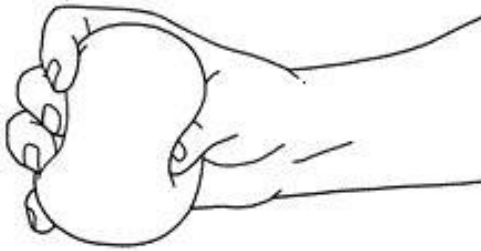
If the symptoms do not resolve themselves, your GP might refer you to physiotherapy. Treatment normally includes education about the cause of the pain, and advice about changes your daily activities to limit the pain. Elbow strengthening exercises will be given, and other exercises around the neck and shoulder will be given if needed. Sometimes taping, elbow supports or hands-on treatments may be tried.

What exercises can I do to help?

The aim of these exercises is to strengthen the muscles and tendons around the elbow. You may feel muscle ache after the

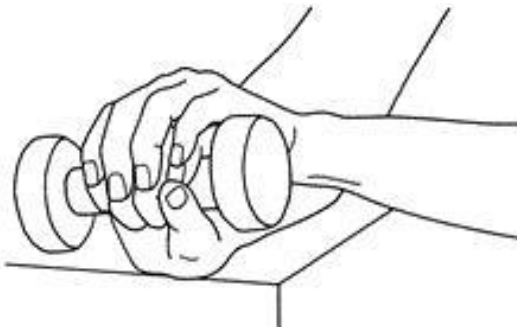
exercises, but they should not cause a large increase in your pain.

Exercise one



1. Hold onto a stress ball or rolled up towel with your wrist in a neutral position.
2. Squeeze the ball/towel.
3. Hold for five to 10 seconds, repeat three times.

Exercise two



1. Rest your arm on a table with your palm facing the floor.
2. Hold a light weight (or small bottle of water) in your hand.
3. Lift your wrist up. If this is painful to do, use your other hand to help (as shown in the picture).
4. Then slowly lower your hand down without any help from the other hand.
5. Repeat 15 times, three times daily.

What if my symptoms do not improve?

If you cannot do the above exercises due to pain or your symptoms do not improve, speak to your GP. You may benefit from physiotherapy.

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www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/pals

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