

Tennis Elbow (Lateral Epicondylitis)

Lateral epicondylitis, commonly known as **tennis elbow**, is a painful condition involving the tendons that attach to the bone on the outside (**lateral**) part of the elbow.

Pain is the primary reason for patients to seek medical evaluation for lateral epicondylitis. The pain is located on the outside of the elbow over the bone region known as the **lateral epicondyle**. This area can become tender to touch. Occasionally, any motion of the elbow can be painful.



This condition most commonly affects individuals between ages 30-50, but it can occur in all ages and in both men and women. Here are some potential causes of the condition:

- **Overuse:** This can be both non-work and work-related. Overuse can happen from repetitive gripping and grasping activities, such as meat cutting, plumbing, painting, auto-mechanic work, etc.
- **Trauma:** Although less common, a direct blow to the elbow may result in swelling of the tendon that can lead to degeneration. This can make the elbow more susceptible to an overuse injury.

Conservative Treatment

With tennis elbow, some patients will find that their symptoms go away spontaneously within a year. For others, both surgical and nonsurgical treatments are available. Non-surgical treatments will almost always be considered first.

- **Activity modification:** initially, the activity causing the condition should be limited. Modifying grips or techniques, such as use of a different size racket in tennis, may relieve the problem.
- **Medication:** anti-inflammatory medications may help relieve pain.
- **Brace:** a tennis elbow brace, a band worn over the muscle of the forearm just below the elbow, can reduce the tension on the tendon and allow it to heal.
- **Physical therapy:** stretching and/or strengthening exercises, ultrasound, or heat treatments may help the pain.
- **Steroid injections:** a steroid is a strong anti-inflammatory medication that can be injected into the area.