

## TENNIS ELBOW TREATMENT

### Symptoms

Pain is the most common and obvious symptom associated with tennis elbow. Pain is most often experienced on the outside of the upper forearm, but can also be experienced anywhere from the elbow joint to the wrist.

Weakness, stiffness and a general restriction of movement are also quite common in sufferers of tennis elbow. Even tingling and numbness can be experienced.

### Prevention

There are a number of preventative techniques which will help to prevent tennis elbow, including bracing and strapping, modifying equipment, taking extended rests and even learning new routines for repetitive activities. The three most important measures are as follows:

**1-** A thorough and correct warm up will help to prepare the muscles and tendons for any activity to come. Without a proper warm up the muscles and tendons will be tight and stiff. There will be limited blood flow to the forearm area, which will result in a lack of oxygen and nutrients for the muscles. This is a sure-fire recipe for a muscle or tendon injury. Before any activity be sure to thoroughly warm up all the muscles and tendons which will be used during your sport or activity.

**2-** Flexible muscles and tendons are extremely important in the prevention of most strain or sprain injuries. When muscles and tendons are flexible and supple, they are able to move and perform without being over stretched. If however, your muscles and tendons are tight and stiff, it is quite easy for those muscles and tendons to be pushed beyond their natural range of movement. When this happens, strains, sprains, and pulled muscles occur.

**3-** Strengthening and conditioning the muscles of the forearm and wrist will also help to prevent tennis elbow.

### Treatment

Tennis elbow is a soft tissue injury of the muscles and tendons around the elbow joint, and therefore should be treated like any other soft tissue injury. Immediately following an injury, or at the onset of pain, the R.I.C.E.R. regime should be employed. This involves **R**est, **I**ce, **C**ompression, **E**levation, and **R**eferral to an appropriate professional for an accurate diagnosis.

It is critical that the R.I.C.E.R. regime be implemented for at least the first 48 to 72 hours. Doing this will give you the best possible chance of a complete and full recovery.

The next phase of treatment (after the first 48 to 72 hours) involves a number of physiotherapy techniques. The application of heat and massage is one of the most effective treatments for removing scar tissue and speeding up the healing process of the muscles and tendons.

Once most of the pain has been reduced, it is time to move onto the rehabilitation phase of your treatment. The aim of this phase is to regain the strength, power, endurance and flexibility of the muscle and tendons that have been injured.

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## Exercise and rehabilitation

**Stretching your forearm extensors is important in establishing a full range of motion and in achieving alignment during tissue repair.** Begin your first stretch by extending your arm with the palm of your hand facing downwards and then pull your hand upwards towards your forearm. The second stretch is a reversal of this, meaning that you pull your hand downward towards the underside of your forearm. If this stretch proves painful, simply keep your arm bent during the stretch to reduce the intensity.

**As you begin to show signs of improvement, resistance exercises can be added.** The weight should be light at first, perhaps with dynabands being used before progressing to dumbbells. Wrist curls are a good exercise that works the underside of the forearm muscles. Grasp a dumbbell in each hand and sit down. Then lay your forearms on your thighs with your hands dangling over your knees, your palms facing upwards. Begin your first repetition by curling the weight upward at the wrist and then slowly lowering. A similar exercise to work the tops of your forearms can be performed by starting with your palms facing downwards. Initially, three sets of 10 repetitions should be performed daily; once you achieve 25 reps, add an extra two-kilogram weight.

**You could also include isometric exercises.** The first requires you to squeeze a tennis ball in the palm of your hand and hold it momentarily before releasing. The second is a rubber band exercise, where the band should be placed at your fingertips. Start the exercise by extending your fingers outwards and then hold for a few seconds before releasing. Aim to perform these exercises twice a day.

**Once your overall strength improves, other elbow extension exercises can be included where appropriate.** Some of the most effective ones are demonstrated here:

[http://www.nismat.org/ptcor/tennis\\_elbow/](http://www.nismat.org/ptcor/tennis_elbow/)

The important point is to maintain your aerobic fitness by cycling, say, or jogging - any exercise that doesn't strain the elbow. This will help smooth your transition back on to the tennis court.

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