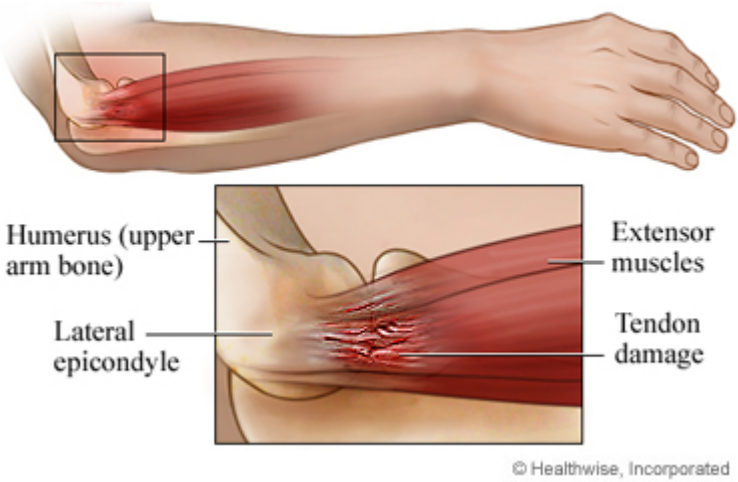
Tennis Elbow: Care Instructions



Overview

Tennis elbow is soreness or pain on the outer part of the elbow. The pain occurs when the tendon is stretched and becomes irritated by repeated twisting of the hand, wrist, and forearm. A tendon is a tough tissue that connects muscle to bone. This injury is common in tennis players. But you also can get it from many activities that work the same muscles. Examples include gardening, painting, and using tools.

Tennis elbow usually heals with rest and treatment at home.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Rest your fingers, wrist, and forearm. Try to stop or reduce any activity that causes elbow pain. You may have to rest your arm for weeks to months. Follow your doctor's directions for how long to rest.
- Put ice or a cold pack on your elbow for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Try to do this every 1 to 2 hours for the next 3 days (when you are awake) or until the swelling goes down. Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin. You can try heat, or alternating heat and ice, after the first 3 days.
- If your doctor gave you a brace or splint, use it as directed. A "counterforce" brace is a strap around your forearm, just below your elbow. It may ease the pressure on the tendon and spread force throughout your arm.
- Prop up your elbow on pillows to help reduce swelling.
- Follow your doctor's or physical therapist's directions for exercise.
- Return to your usual activities slowly.
- Try to prevent the problem. Learn the best techniques for your sport. For example, make sure the grip on your tennis racquet is not too big for your hand. Try not to hit a tennis ball late in your swing.

- If you work, consider asking your employer about new ways of doing your job if your elbow pain is caused by something you do at work.

Medicines

- Be safe with medicines. Read and follow all instructions on the label.
  - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
  - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.

When should you call for help?

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- Your pain is worse.
- You cannot bend your elbow normally.
- Your arm or hand is cool or pale or changes color.
- You have tingling, weakness, or numbness in your hand and fingers.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You have work problems caused by your elbow pain.
- Your pain is not better after 2 weeks.

Where can you learn more?

Go to https://www.healthwise.net/patiented

Enter **C285** in the search box to learn more about **"Tennis Elbow: Care Instructions".**

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