



Elbow Pain

A GUIDE TO SIGNS, SYMPTOMS, TREATMENT AND PREVENTION

Elbow pain may be caused by a traumatic or overuse injury. People may report feeling an aching or other discomfort in the elbow that is not related to a direct injury.

Causes

Elbow tendonitis is an inflammation and injury to the tendons. Tendons are soft tissues attaching muscle to bone.

Tennis Elbow

People who play racquet sports are more likely to injury the tendons on the outside of the elbow. Generally, this condition is called tennis elbow, or lateral epicondylitis. Pain can also be located in the forearm and wrist. Although lateral epicondylitis is referred to as tennis elbow, a person can have this injury without ever playing a racquet sport.

Golfer's Elbow

Golfers are more likely to injury the tendons on the inside of the elbow, and this is called golfer's elbow, or medial epicondylitis. Some people may also feel stiffness in their elbow or weakness in their hands or wrists. Because there are nerves that run through this part of the elbow, people suffering from golfer's elbow may also report tingling or a pins and needles sensation in their hands or fingers. Although medial epicondylitis is often referred to as golfer's elbow, a person can have this condition without being a golfer.

Other sports that require extensive use of the wrist and arm, like baseball, may cause elbow tendinitis.

Other common causes of elbow pain are:

- Arthritis – narrowing of the joint space and loss of cartilage in the elbow
- Bursitis – inflammation of a fluid-filled cushion beneath the skin
- Elbow strains
- Infection of the elbow

Prevention

- Reduce the activity that causes the pain.
- Warm-up slowly. Stretch the forearm before, during, and after exercise.
- Use an elbow sleeve to help keep your arm warm while playing.
- For tennis, use the correct grip size, a two-handed backhand, and proper tension racquet strings.
- Perform regular stretching and strengthening exercises.
- Bracing to protect and support the elbow, as suggested by your physician or physical therapist.

First Aid

- Apply ice up to 15 minutes every hour for the first day. Continue to apply ice every 3 to 4 hours for up to 3 days.
- Wrap the elbow with a bandage to keep the elbow immobilized.
- Keep the elbow elevated above your heart.
- While you are resting the joint, take pain relievers such as acetaminophen, naproxen or ibuprofen.
- Activity modification is essential in the first few weeks following the injury.

When to Contact a Medical Professional

- You have prolonged tendinitis that does not improve with home care.
- Pain is due to a traumatic elbow injury.
- There is obvious deformity.
- You are unable to use the elbow.
- You have a fever or swelling and redness of your elbow.