

# **Argus Orthopaedic Zone**

## **Tennis Elbow**

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.  
Orthopaedic Surgeon

### ***Transforming patient information into patient understanding.***

Everyone has heard the term "Tennis Elbow". It is one of those things that you think is familiar, but then on further consideration you really don't know much about it.

The exact origin as for most terms is lost in the dim past. Apparently the pain on the lateral or outer elbow was noted to be common in tennis players.

Maybe I don't see a lot of tennis player, but most of my patients who have this pain work in a shop, are gardeners or farmers.

### **What Is It?**

Tennis elbow is a painful condition on and around the bony prominence on the outside (lateral side) of the elbow. Doctors call it lateral epicondylitis. Pain may stay in the elbow area or radiate down your arm. Gripping or raising your wrist may intensify the pain. Some patients can't sleep due to pain.

### **Cause**

It seems to come from repetitive arm movement. Over use of muscles in your arm can lead to tiny tears in the tendons that attach the muscles in your forearm to the elbow.

If you continue to do the activity without allowing the tissue to heal, the tendons become inflamed.

Other common activities besides tennis that cause this are painting, raking, rowing, hammering or using a screw driver.

### **Initial Treatment**

If you have increased your activity in one of the areas and feel tenderness that radiates down the arm, take some time off. Stop doing whatever is causing the symptoms.

Rest allows the tiny tears of the tendon to heal. If the symptoms are sports related you should consider if your technique or equipment is causing it.

### **Further Treatment**

- Conservative treatment usually works
- Ice reduces pain and swelling
- Advil or Aspirin are anti-inflammatory
- A wrap around forearm brace is available
- If symptoms don't subside in 2 weeks you may need an appointment

### **Office Appointment**

Of course I examine the entire arm and not just the elbow. I will take an x-ray of the elbow to check for arthritis, calcium in tissues, bone chips, etc.

- Injection of cortisone-based steroidal medication is sometimes used.
- Physical therapy is useful in stubborn cases. A variety of techniques is available.
- Flexibility and strengthening exercises are effective and will allow return to activities or sports.
- Injection of the patients own *Platelet Rich Plasma* is a newer technique.
- Arthroscopic or open surgery are required rarely in very stubborn cases.

### **Golfer's Elbow**

There is a similar condition on the medial or inner aspect of the elbow that is common in golfers. It is a cousin of Tennis Elbow. The pain focus is the knobby lump on the inside of the elbow closest to the body. Treatment of both conditions is similar.

I hope this gives you more awareness of these fairly common elbow problems. I see a lot of these in the office and would be happy to evaluate the problem if the initial suggestions don't help.

For more great information about all the things I treat in the office and hospital, check out the office website [www.orthopodsurgeon.com](http://www.orthopodsurgeon.com), which can take you to Your Orthopaedic Connection.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives. I specialize in you.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush