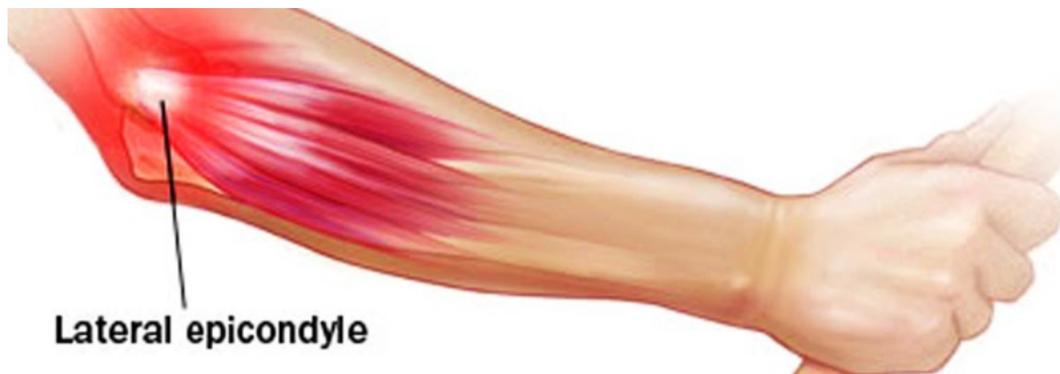


## Tennis elbow



Tennis elbow is known medically as lateral epicondylitis which causes pain over the outside of your elbow. Anyone can get it, particularly as you get older. Tennis elbow is a type of tendonopathy, which means it affects your tendons. It develops when the 'common extensor tendon' which joins your forearm muscles to the outside of your elbow, becomes thickened and swells. This is usually as a result of repeated gripping with your wrist in slight flexion which pulls on where the tendon inserts.

The most common symptom is pain and tenderness on the outside of your elbow and in the muscles of your forearm. The pain can vary from mild discomfort to severe pain that keeps you awake at night. It may stop you from doing everyday things like holding a cup. Your pain may get worse when you grip something like shaking someone's hand. Repetitive wrist movements, bending your wrist backwards against a force, or lifting a weight can also increase the pain. Often it is painful to straighten your elbow first thing in the morning.

How to treat - You usually do not need to see a doctor if you think you have tennis elbow. A large proportion of people get better with rest and by modifying the activity that aggravated it initially. Buy a wrist splint, which will hold your wrist with slight extension which will rest the muscle group that is causing the pain. These types of splints are usually used for carpal tunnel syndrome. Epicondylitis clasps also have some limited success. Stretch your forearm muscles every day by extending the elbow and putting your hand flat against the wall with your thumb pointing upwards. Lean through your wrist. Then rub your elbow with an ice cube so it gets really cold. Dry your elbow and then rub in some anti-inflammatory gel you can buy over the counter. Repeat daily. You will need to wear the brace for at least 6 weeks. Follow this advice for 6 weeks.

If this does not improve then an injection into the tendon may help. However, if you do not modify what caused the pain then it is likely to reoccur. The injection will often be successful but can cause thinning to the tendon and so repeated injections can cause long term tendon damage. Surgery should only be considered as a last option when conservative treatment has failed. This involves debriding the area that is inflamed and moving the insertion of the tendon. It will restrict your activities for up to 3 months after surgery. Often people are left with elbow pain post op.