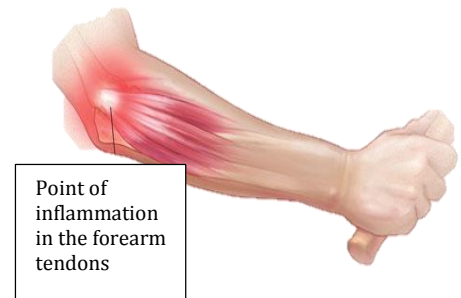


Tennis Elbow

Lateral epicondylitis, or tennis elbow as it is more commonly known, is an overuse injury characterised by pain and tenderness on the outer part of the elbow. Although the name comes from the higher incidence amongst tennis players, the condition is also common among manual labourers such as fitters, steel fixers and concreters.

Tennis elbow involves the muscles of the forearm, which are responsible for extending the wrist and fingers. The tendons of these muscles join the muscle to the bony point on the outside of the elbow (lateral epicondyle). It is inflammation of one of these tendons that results in the pain characteristic of tennis elbow.



Causes:

Tennis elbow is an overuse injury caused by excessive and/or prolonged wrist extension such as gripping hand tools like hammers and wrenches. The excessive use of these muscles can cause micro damage to the tendon which results in inflammation and pain.

Signs and symptoms:

The symptoms of tennis elbow usually develop gradually, slowly worsening over a period of weeks or months. There is usually no specific acute injury associated with the onset of symptoms. Signs and symptoms include:

- Pain or burning on the outer part of the elbow
- Very localised tenderness at or very close to the bony point on the outside of the elbow
- Increased pain with wrist extension



Treatment:

Approximately 80-95% of people with tennis elbow have success with conservative management. Initially a period of rest from the aggravating activity is recommended to allow the inflammation to settle. Topical and/or oral based non-steroidal anti-inflammatories can be beneficial in reducing inflammation during this period. After this, the focus shifts to strengthening and stretching of the affected muscles and exploring contributing factors such as poor technique and/or inappropriate equipment. Full recovery may take weeks to months and a small percentage of cases may not respond to conservative management, and require corticosteroid injections or surgery.

Tennis elbow is a common overuse injury amongst manual laborers. However with early diagnosis and appropriate intervention the issue can be managed quickly and effectively.