

Understanding and Managing Tennis Elbow

Tennis elbow, also known as lateral epicondylalgia, is a painful condition that commonly occurs from overusing the forearm muscles which are responsible for elbow, wrist, and hand movements. However, it can also occur because of direct impact to the area.



Lateral epicondyle of humerus (arm bone), where the tendons of the forearm muscles originate from.

Common symptoms:

- Pain around the outer elbow.
- Pain or discomfort may also be felt at the wrist and/or upper arm.
- Weakness and difficulty in gripping, lifting heavy objects or wringing clothes.
- Swelling and/or warmth around the outer elbow.

Associated risk factors:

- A sudden increase in use of the arm.
- Aged between 35-60 years old.
- Smoking
- Obesity

Most people with tennis elbow get better with adequate rest over time, however, recovery may be slower in some people. If your pain persists, speak to your doctor and physiotherapist.

What can I do?

- 1. Activity modification:** Avoid prolonged repetitive hand and wrist motions and take regular breaks. If required to lift heavy objects, placing the palm facing up may be better than lifting with the palm down.
- 2. Pain-relief medication:** Take the medication prescribed by your doctor to help relief pain.
- 3. Brace:** An elbow brace may be helpful to reduce pain while at work.
- 4. Exercise:** Depending on your condition, your physiotherapist will guide you on suitable exercises, provide relevant advice and pain relief methods.

Exercises

Below are some exercises that can help you with your flexibility and strength. You may experience some discomfort or slight pain as you begin to move and exercise. It is important that you do the exercises in a relaxed manner. If you feel an increase in pain or if you are unsure how to do them, please consult your doctor or physiotherapist.

The Pain Rating Scale below can help to make sure you are performing your activities at the right level¹:



0-3 out of 10: Continue.

4-5 out of 10: Reduce the number of times, amount and speed of movement.

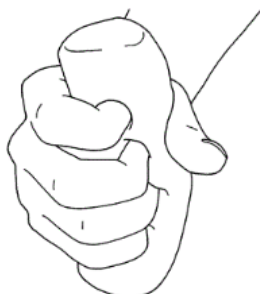
6 or above: Stop exercise. Consider another exercise instead.

1. Wrist extension hold

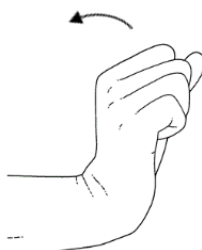



- Place your affected hand on the table.
- Put the other hand over the back of the painful hand.
- Lift the back of the hand up while preventing movement with other hand.
- Start with 50% effort. If pain is above 5 on the scale, reduce the level of effort.
- Hold for up to 10 seconds.
- Repeat 5 to 10 times.

2. Towel squeeze



- Support affected forearm on a table.
- Gently squeeze a putty or towel.
- Start off with 50% effort. If pain is above 5 on the scale, reduce the level of effort.
- Hold for up to 10 seconds.
- Repeat 5 to 10 times.

<p>3. Moving wrist up and down</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Place affected arm with palm facing down and wrist over the edge of a table.• Bend your wrist all the way up and lower all the way down.• Repeat 5 to 10 times
<p>4. Wall push-up</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stand facing a wall with your arms straight and hands on the wall.• Do push-ups against the wall keeping your body in a straight line, with your chin tucked in.• Repeat 5 to 10 times.

Please note that the instructions illustrated in this handout is strictly for information purpose. If you have any queries, kindly proceed to check with your doctor or physiotherapist.

References:

1. Wong-Baker FACES Foundation. (2020, April 28). Home - Wong-Baker FACES Foundation. <https://wongbakerfaces.org/>
2. General exercises 2nd Edition by PhysioTools (PT1) (2016). PhysioTools.