

Tennis Elbow

Lateral epicondylitis — pain on the outer elbow

WHAT IT IS

Overuse strain where the wrist-extending tendons attach to the outer elbow. **Most people who get it have never played tennis** — it comes from gripping, lifting, wringing clothes, using a screwdriver, cooking, typing with a poor wrist position, or any repeated gripping task.

Pain is felt on the **outer point of the elbow**, worse when you grip, lift a cup, shake hands, or turn a door handle.

It settles in most people, but it is slow — often 6 to 12 months. Patience is genuinely part of the treatment.

What to do

- **Identify and modify the activity causing it.** This is the part that matters most and the part most people skip. Reduce repeated gripping, and change your technique or tool where you can.
- **Lift with the palm facing upwards**, not downwards — a small change that unloads the tendon considerably.
- Use a **thicker grip** on tools, pens and racquets. Carry bags on the forearm or shoulder rather than gripping.
- **Ice** the outer elbow for 15 minutes after activity.
- A **counterforce brace** (a strap two finger-widths below the painful point) helps during activity. Wear it while working, not all day.

THE EXERCISES ARE WHAT CURE IT

Strengthening the tendon is far more effective than resting it. Once the sharpest pain has settled, start:

Eccentric wrist extension: hold a light weight (start with a 500 g water bottle), palm facing down, forearm supported on a table. Use your **other hand** to lift the wrist up, then **lower it slowly over 3 to 5 seconds** using the painful arm alone. **15 repetitions, 3 sets, once daily.** Mild discomfort during this is expected and acceptable. Increase the weight gradually over weeks. Add gentle wrist extensor stretches: arm straight, palm down, gently bend the wrist downward with the other hand, hold 30 seconds.

A note on steroid injections: they give quick relief but the pain often returns, and repeated injections can weaken the tendon. We use them selectively. The exercises give the more lasting result.

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