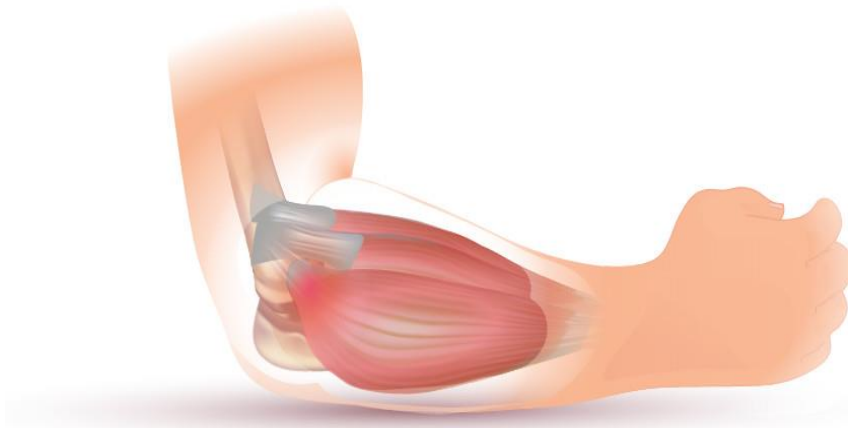


## Tennis Elbow (Lateral elbow pain)

### Patient Information



(<https://www.injurymap.com/diagnoses/tennis-elbow-golf-elbow>)

### What is Tennis Elbow?

Tennis elbow is also known as lateral elbow tendinopathy, or lateral elbow pain. It refers to a condition that results in pain around the outside of the elbow. There are numerous muscles in your forearm that produce movement at your wrist and hand. These muscles attach on the inside and outside of your elbow. Irritation can occur around the area of attachment of these muscles on the outside of the elbow, resulting in pain.

### Causes of Tennis Elbow?

Tennis elbow is a common cause of elbow pain. Symptoms can develop gradually or suddenly. It commonly occurs if you do a lot of heavy or repetitive arm activities such as painting, computer work or some sports. Less commonly it occurs due to trauma, or after a period of inactivity causing weakness in the muscles. Tennis elbow is most common between the ages of 35 and 50 and affects men and women equally.

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## **Symptoms of Tennis Elbow**

- Pain and tenderness on the outside of the elbow.
- Pain can range from mild and intermittent, to more severe pain
- Pain can also radiate into the forearm and wrist
- Pain on repeated wrist movements, gripping activities or rotation of the arm.

If there are any features such as:

- Red swollen skin with pain over the elbow and associated fever
- Severe pain and snapping sensations in the front of the elbow when lifting
- Pain and difficulty moving the elbow after an injury

You will need to see your GP or call 111 for further advice on what to do next.

## **How long will Tennis Elbow last?**

Tennis elbow is a self-limiting condition which means it will usually improve by itself. Most people will make a full recovery within a few months.

## **What can I do to help myself?**

Tennis elbow can be self-managed at home with the following advice.

### **Activity modification**

If you have recently increased or changed your activities at home or work, then reducing these activities slightly may help. You can do this by reducing the duration/intensity of an activity and/or allowing slightly longer recovery periods in between. If an activity causes severe pain, then you may need to stop or modify this activity until your pain has reduced. If you work at a desk or computer, it may be useful to look at how your workstation is set up and see if you can make any changes. The following leaflet has some useful ideas;

[Physicalwellbeingforofficeworkers.pdf \(wiltshirehealthandcare.nhs.uk\)](#)

### **Pain relief**

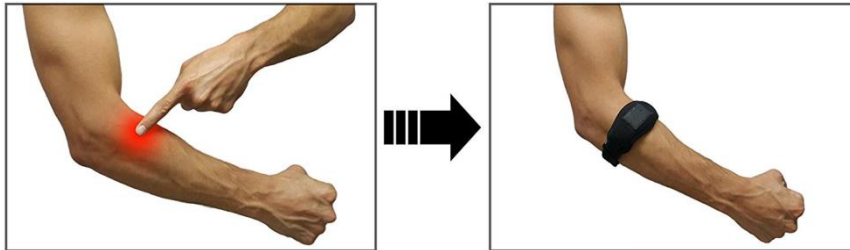
You may be prescribed simple pain relief or anti-inflammatory medication: take this as prescribed until the pain settles. You may also be advised to try a topical treatment such as ibuprofen gel. Your GP or Pharmacist will advise you on this.

### **Heat or cold**

Heat or cold therapy can be used to help pain. Use an ice pack wrapped in its cover or a damp tea towel for up to 15 minutes. Alternatively try using a wheat bag/hot water bottle wrapped in a towel/cover. Make sure to protect your skin with a towel and regularly check your skin to avoid any skin damage, as both can cause burns if used incorrectly.

## Bracing

There is some evidence on the use of braces to offload the stress placed on the tendons in the forearm. These can be used in conjunction with the other treatment modalities and can be purchased online or from a pharmacy. Try the brace in different positions near your elbow until it gives you the most benefit from your aggravating activities.



## Exercises

Exercises can be used to increase the functional strength in your elbow and forearm. This may help to settle the irritation and pain that you are experiencing. You may only be able to do a small amount at the start, but this will improve over time. A small increase in pain while exercising is okay as long as it goes away within 30 minutes and is not worse the next day. If you do get an increase in pain, don't worry, do fewer repetitions the next time and then gradually build up again. If you follow the instructions and exercises in this leaflet, there is an excellent chance you will improve your elbow pain and not need any more treatment. If your elbow does not start to improve within 12 weeks, or gets worse despite the exercises, you will need to visit your health professional again. Even if you are only seeing slight improvements keep doing the exercises, often it can take 3 months or longer to get a significant improvement in your pain and function.

## Getting the most from your exercise

- Build the exercises into your daily routine so you can do them regularly.
- Find time when you are not under pressure and can give the exercises your full attention.
- Try to do the exercises 4-5 days a week, with at least 2 rest days.
- Your physiotherapist can highlight which exercises are the best for you to try.
- It helps to keep an exercise diary to record how many repetitions you have done and see how you are progressing.
- Your physiotherapist may recommend other exercises for you that relate more specifically to your individual problems or will help you to do your job, hobbies or sporting activities without pain.

## Bottle Squeeze

- Start in a comfortable position with the elbow supported.
- Hold a bottle in your hand
- Gently squeeze the bottle and hold for 10 seconds
- Gradually increase the hold to 30 seconds
- Repeat up to 3 times
- Once you can comfortably do this try turning the bottle sideways and repeat as above



## Isometric wrist extension

- Sit with your wrist over the edge of a table (or rest it on the table if more comfortable). Keep your palm facing down. Make a light fist. Use your other hand to resist the movement of your hand upwards. Your hand should not actually move during this exercise.
- Start with just a gentle resistance for 10 seconds and relax. Gradually build up to 30 seconds.
- Aim to do 2 sets of 5 repetitions with a 2 minute rest between each set.
- Once you can do this exercise easily and without increased pain, progress onto the next exercise



## Wrist extension with weight

- Rest your affected forearm on a table so your hand is hanging over the edge. Slowly over 3 seconds extend your wrist upwards. Then slowly over 3 seconds lower your hand down. Keep your forearm flat against the table.
- If this is comfortable, progress this exercise by holding a light weight in your hand.
- Gradually increase the size of the weight as comfortable. You should be using a weight that is heavy enough to cause muscle fatigue.
- Aim to do 4 sets of 8 repetitions, with a 2 minute rest between sets.
- Try following the video in this link for guidance;  
<https://youtu.be/TRHxr7jTFdw>



## **Other treatments**

- In most cases the advice and exercises outlined in this leaflet will be successful in settling your symptoms. If your pain is persistent then you may be referred on to an advanced physiotherapy practitioner, or more rarely an orthopaedic surgeon.
- Corticosteroid injections are not usually offered for tennis elbow as the evidence base is poor for their effectiveness, and they carry some risks.

## **Further Information**

If you would like to seek the advice of a physiotherapist, there are a number of options within Wiltshire. Please speak to your GP practice about the ways you can be referred.

Alternatively, you can visit our website for further information on accessing our services;

<https://wiltshirehealthandcare.nhs.uk/physiotherapy/>

For further information on elbow pain;

<https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/tennis-elbow/>

<https://www.csp.org.uk/conditions/elbow-pain/video-exercises-elbow-pain>

## **Other useful websites;**

<https://www.activewiltshire.org.uk/>

Here you will find information on improving your activity level and details of what is available in your local area.

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/public-health-weight>

Here you will find information about weight management options in your local area.

## **Health improvement coaches - Wiltshire Council**

Health Improvement Coaches work on a one to one basis to support behaviour change and improve health. They concentrate on behaviours associated with ill health including unhealthy eating often linked to obesity, stop or reduce smoking, sensible drinking, increasing physical activity, building confidence and motivation to change and boosting self-esteem, they also signpost and support clients to access other services and activities where appropriate.

## **Safeguarding**

Wiltshire Health and Care (WHC) are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk of abuse, including victims and survivors of domestic abuse. We expect all WHC staff to share this commitment and promote safeguarding by implementing WHC policies and procedures, act promptly on concerns and share information appropriately.

If you or your carer have any concerns regarding a child or adult's safety, please phone Wiltshire Safeguarding Team on 0300 456 0111 (Adult) or 0300 456 0108 (Child) (9am – 5pm Monday - Friday) or please call 999 if you feel they are in immediate danger.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

If you have any questions, or concerns, suggestions or compliments about our service, please speak to a member of staff.

This information sheet is available in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 0300 123 7797 and [whc.pals@nhs.net](mailto:whc.pals@nhs.net)

## **Patient and Public Involvement**

We value your opinions which will help us to further develop our services.

If you wish to provide feedback or get involved in our patient participation groups, please email the Patient and Public Involvement Officer at [ask.wiltshirehealthandcare@nhs.net](mailto:ask.wiltshirehealthandcare@nhs.net) or telephone 01249 454386.