



Lateral Epicondylitis (Tennis Elbow)

By: Maureen Dwight, Registered Physiotherapist

This injury to the elbow frequently plagues racquet players both amateur and professional. The extensor tendons and muscles which lie on the back of the forearm are the tissues primarily affected by microtears and an inflammatory reaction. The injury usually occurs when the forces exerted become greater than the strength of the muscles.

Poor technique and an incorrect grip size may be contributing to stress at the elbow. If you are experiencing difficulties, consult your racquet pro.

Prevention

Warm up slowly and stretch the muscles of the shoulder, forearm and hand. The most important stretch for prevention is as illustrated (Fig 2). This stretch should be held without movement for 15-20 seconds (longer if symptoms are present) and repeated at least 3 times.

Wearing a tennis elbow band can help reduce the stress at the muscle's origin and is a good idea if you have experienced more than one episode of elbow pain. The band should be placed over the centre of the major muscle belly, approximately 2 finger breadths below the elbow crease. Tense the muscles when applying the band otherwise it will become too tight during use. You may have to experiment to find the style of support that helps you the most.

Lateral epicondylitis is also a common work injury, associated with tasks of a repetitive nature.

These stretches are also appropriate for prevention and following the onset of pain due to work causes.

If you are experiencing elbow pain which has not responded quickly to ice, rest and stretching, or recurrent episodes of pain, you may require a consultation for a full evaluation and program of exercises.