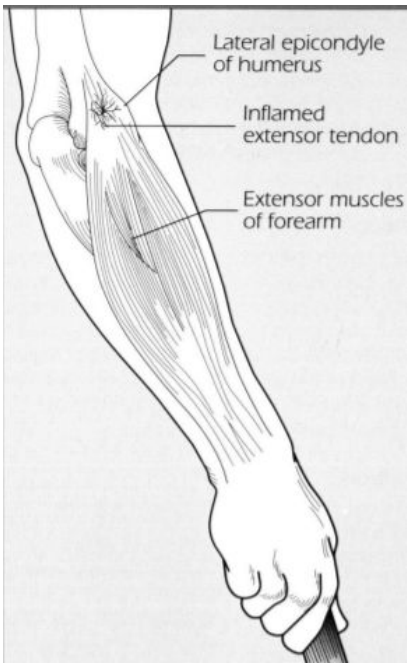
Dr. Andrew Morris
Orthopaedics and Sports Medicine
Office: 256-236-4121
www.AnnistonOrtho.com/Morris

Lateral Epicondylitis (Tennis Elbow)







TREATMENT

Rest

You may have to stop playing golf, tennis, or other racquet sports for a while. This period of rest is very important, because you don't want to aggravate the condition by continuing activity, especially if you experience pain. Your doctor may even recommend that you not use your arm for anything—for example, lifting a briefcase, opening doors, repeated handshaking. Only rarely will a sling relieve the discomfort.

Ice

Apply ice to your elbow three times a day for 30 to 60 minutes in the early painful stage and for 15 minutes after active use of your arm. Protect your skin by putting a towel between your elbow and the ice bag.

Stretching

Stretching will help prevent stiffness by breaking down any scar tissue that may result from inflammation (see Exercises).

Physical Therapy

At first a physical therapist will work with you to reduce the inflammation in your arm. The therapist or your doctor can teach you the technique of ice massage. Later they will teach you how to strengthen your muscles to protect the inflamed area and prevent the injury from happening again.

Medication

Your doctor may prescribe medication or an injection of local anesthetic to help relieve inflammation and pain. If necessary, an injection of cortisone may also be used to relieve the pain and joint tenderness. This can make physical therapy more effective. After a cortisone injection you shouldn't engage in sports for about a week or two. Check with your doctor for his or her recommendation.

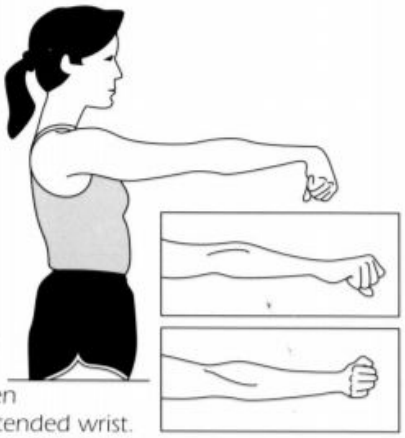
Brace

Your doctor may recommend any of several braces, supports, or molded casts designed for this problem. A brace provides support for your elbow, thus reducing the pressure on the inflamed tendon. At first you may need to wear the brace at all times, except when doing gentle exercises to avoid elbow stiffness. Later, it may be necessary only for protection during activities using the injured arm.

Surgery

Elbow Stretch

Hold your injured arm at shoulder level in front of your body with the elbow straight. With your hand clenched, flex the wrist as far as possible. Return the wrist to neutral position, and alternately turn the arm inward with a flexed wrist, and then outward with an extended wrist.



Repeat _____ times,_____ times/day.



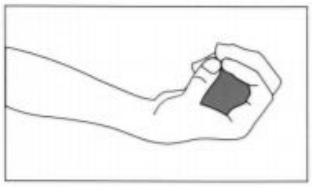
Wrist Curls

Sit with your injured arm resting on a table and supported by your fist, as shown. Grasp a one-pound weight or unopened can of food and slowly raise your wrist as high as possible. Do the exercise first with palm up, then with palm down. As your strength improves, you can gradually increase the weight of the dumbbell.

Repeat _____ times,_____ times/day.

Squeezing

Squeezing a rubber ball (racquet-ball size) will also strengthen the injured area. If that is too difficult, start by squeezing a sponge or washcloth in water.



Repeat _____ times,_____ times/day.

Twisting

With your arms outstretched, practice wringing out a dry terry cloth towel with both hands.

Repeat _____ times,

_____ times/day.



IN SUMMARY

Tennis elbow/golfer's elbow is a common injury among people who are active in these sports. Many injuries can be successfully treated, allowing you to return to an active life. Your physician is your best source of information about how to relieve your discomfort.