

Lateral Epicondylitis (Tennis Elbow)

Overview

This condition, commonly called tennis elbow, is an inflammation of the tendons that connect the muscles of the forearm to the elbow. The pain is primarily felt at the lateral epicondyle, the bony bump on the outer side of the elbow.

Inside the Elbow

The elbow joint is a complex group of bones, muscles, ligaments and tendons. Lateral epicondylitis involves the extensor muscles, which control the extension of the wrist and fingers, and the extensor tendons, which anchor the muscles to the lateral epicondyle.

Causes

Lateral epicondylitis is caused by specific repetitive motions of the wrist and arm. The stress placed on the forearm by a tennis backstroke is a common culprit. This stress causes tiny tears to develop in one or more extensor tendons. This results in inflammation and pain.

Symptoms

This condition typically causes pain and tenderness that is centered on the lateral epicondyle. This pain may radiate along the forearm and wrist. The grip of the hand may feel weak.

Risk Factors

Lateral epicondylitis typically affects people between the ages of 30 and 50. It is a common complaint of athletes who play racquet sports, but certain occupations can also raise a person's risk. This condition is common among plumbers, painters, carpenters and butchers.

Treatment

Treatment options may include rest, ice, anti-inflammatory medications and stretching exercises. A physician may recommend an arm brace or wrist splint and physical therapy or massage therapy. Steroid injections or PRP injections may also provide relief.

