

GOLFER'S ELBOW AND TENNIS ELBOW

By Dr. Derek Conte

Can't shake hands or grasp a can of greens without pain in your elbow? You may have a condition called, medial or lateral epicondylitis, meaning inflammation of the forearm tendons that connect to the elbow and the bursae below them. Its onset is usually after doing activities you haven't done in a while, like playing tennis or golf, throwing a ball or swinging a hammer, causing a strain/sprain injury in the forearm flexor/extensor muscles and tendons that attach them to the epicondylar bones of the elbow. A single, strong and sudden effort of the arm can cause it as well. It can be very painful and hang around for months, even if treated, and inhibit many activities weakening the arm as a result of disuse.

The flexor and extensor muscles of the forearm are anchored at each end by tendons which attach to the epicondyles of the elbow and to the carpal bones on either side of the wrist. When the muscles are shortened on command by the brain, the wrist will flex or extend as instructed. When the muscles and tendons work much harder than usual, they tighten and tend to stay that way, exerting more pressure than usual on the bursa below (which acts as a sort of Teflon furniture glide for the tendons' smooth movement) and in turn inflaming the bursa as well. This is a complex of irritations we have here and I don't see all of the problems being addressed in



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traditional treatments.

Treatments typically done for epicondylitis include: Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation (RICE); Heat, Aqua-therapy, Compression bands, Non-Steroidals like Ibuprofen, Steroids (if the case has lingered and conservative treatments have been fruitless; Tendon-release surgery may be done if all else fails. The treatment that isn't as common, but very effective, is specific manual release or trigger point therapy aimed at relaxing the tight muscles, which in turn relaxes the tendons, which then relieves the pressure on the bursae. It just makes sense to do this first (find a good massage therapist that knows the anatomy well). Electrical Stimulation can be added to relax the muscles and relieve pain, and Ultrasound seems to work very well to heal the area more rapidly.

From a chiropractic view, it is possible that small misalignments of the wrist, elbow, shoulder, acromioclavicular (AC) and sternoclavicular (SC) joints alter natural motions in the arm and contribute to this type of injury. So getting an evaluation is worthwhile. Sometimes, epicondylitis is self-limiting, but why wait months or longer before you return to the activities you love. Get help now.

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