

# **GOLF RELATED ELBOW PAIN/INJURIES**

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**TENDINOPATHY/TENDINOSIS:** A MAJOR MEDICAL PROBLEM IN SPORTS AS WELL AS SOME WORK ACTIVITIES. IT IS A CONDITION IN AND AROUND THE TENDONS RESULTING FROM OVERLOAD AND OVERUSE.

One of the most common site of injuries in Golf players is the elbow. This condition is better known as Tennis Elbow when it affects the lateral elbow (outer part) or Golfer's Elbow when it affects the medial part (inner part). It is also more commonly known as "tendonitis"/"epicondylitis" or epicondylalgia. However, these terms with "it is" should no longer be used as it implies inflammation.

Recent research advances showed that patients with overuse tendon pain DO NOT suffer from an inflammatory condition of their tendons.

## **What is Tennis Elbow (Lateral Elbow Tendinopathy)?**

It is defined as a condition that causes lateral elbow tendon pain, localised tenderness and impaired performance. This condition is aggravated by specific physical and sporting activities.

**Diagnosis** is determined through history and physical examination, which reveals localised tenderness over the lateral epicondyle (elbow) and reproduction of pain on loading the extensor tendons.

## **Causative Factors:**

- 1. Aging tendons.** With increasing age there are changes in the structure and function of the human tendons as the collagen fibers increase in diameter and decrease in tensile strength and elasticity. Most characterised age-related changes are degeneration of the tenocytes (tendon cells) and collagen fibers.
- 2. Overuse.** Lack of recovery time before the next training session / play. This is more common in better players and men as they play more frequently and do not allow sufficient recovery time. Women players were more irregular and that maybe the reason why their injury profile was less severe as they allow more rest time for recovery.
- 3. Lack of specific fitness/conditioning** for repetitive golf swing.
- 4. Poor Golf swing technique. A chicken wing** which is defined as early loss of extension or breakdown of the lead elbow through the impact phase will lead to the development of Tennis Elbow.

## **Management of lateral elbow tendinopathy:**

- 1. Eccentric loading exercise** is the key to success in prevention and management of tendinopathy. Specific tendon loading while lengthening the tendon has been shown to be more effective than concentric loading of the tendon in the prevention of injury. This type of exercise will stimulate

faster healing. A well-defined exercise program should be the cornerstone of treatment of tendinopathy.

2. **Physical therapy** comprising of muscle energy stretching, heat and acupuncture may be effective in conjunction with eccentric loading. The use of a tennis elbow brace may be helpful when the golfer wants to continue playing.
3. **Injection therapy.** Cortisone injection has been used in the past to suppress inflammation. As tendinopathy is not an inflammatory condition its effectiveness may only be short term and should not be used as a rule in view of its side effects. One of the latest therapies that have been gaining popularity due to its efficacy is the regenerative Prolotherapy injection, using glucose and local anaesthetic injected into the painful neurovascular bundles. These injections help promote the healing process of the tendons.
4. **Surgical management** if all these measures fail ,but should only be considered as a last resort.
5. **Return to sport takes time.** One should have a golf fitness screening by a qualified golf specific physician and a proper fitness programme to correct certain limitations as well as golf swing correction by a qualified golf pro.

**Golfer's Elbow ( medial elbow tendinopathy ) is not as common as Tennis Elbow. Management is similar, but directed to the Flexor tendons.**

**Enquiries:**

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**Bio:**

- President Australian Association of Musculoskeletal Medicine 2007-2009.
- Fellow and Examiner of the Australian College of Physical medicine.
- Postgraduate Diploma and Masters in Physical medicine (Sydney University)
- Conference Convenor for the annual scientific congress AAMM in Sydney 2003 and in Canberra 2006.
- Regular presenter/speaker at AAMM/ACPM and SONS Conferences in Australia and Japan .
- Medical director/provider at numerous International/national sporting events such as the World Karate Championship Sydney; World Junior Athletics Championship, Sydney; World Dance Sport Championship, Sydney; World Hockey Championship, Sydney; and The Australian Indoor Tennis Championship, Sydney as well as local sporting events and musicals. Ski resort medical officer at Charlotte Pass.