CK SPORTS INJURY CLINIC

Online consultations to get you out of pain and back in the game.

Golfer's Elbow (Medial Epicondylitis)

Overview

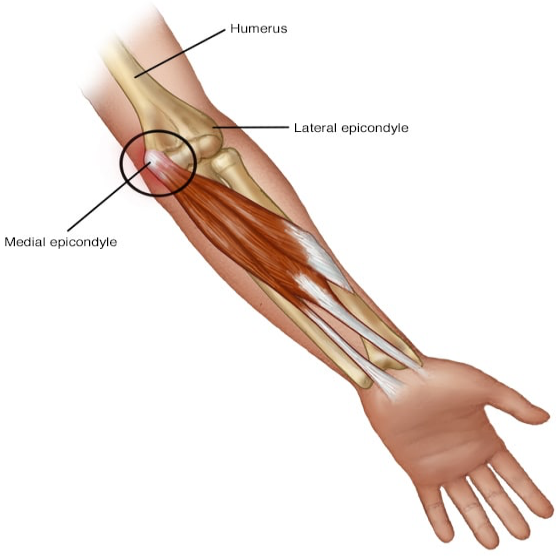


Golfer's elbow is a condition that causes pain where the tendons of your forearm muscles attach to the bony bump (epicondyle) on the inside (medial) of your elbow. The pain might spread into your forearm and wrist.

Golfer's elbow is similar to tennis elbow, which occurs on the outside (lateral) of the elbow. It's not limited to golfers. Tennis players and others who repeatedly use their wrists or clench their fingers, for example carpenters, plumbers, cleaners, can develop also golfer's elbow.

The pain of golfer's elbow doesn't have to keep you off the course, away from your favourite activities or off sick from work. Rest and appropriate treatment can get you back into the swing of things.

Symptoms



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Golfer's elbow is characterized by:

- **Pain and tenderness**. Usually felt on the inner side of your elbow, the pain sometimes extends along the inner side of your forearm. Pain typically worsens with certain movements.
- **Stiffness**. Your elbow may feel stiff, and making a fist might hurt.
- **Weakness**. You may have weakness in your hands and wrists.
- **Numbness or tingling**. These sensations might radiate into one or more fingers — usually the ring and little fingers.

The pain of golfer's elbow can come on suddenly or gradually. The pain might worsen with certain movements, such as swinging a golf club or using a hammer.

Causes

Golfer's elbow, also known as medial epicondylitis, is caused by damage to the muscles and tendons that control your wrist and fingers. The damage is typically related to excess or repeated stress — especially forceful wrist and finger motions. Improper lifting, throwing or hitting, as well as too little warmup or poor conditioning, also can contribute to golfer's elbow.

Besides golf, many activities and occupations can lead to golfer's elbow, including:

- **Racket sports**. Improper technique with tennis strokes, especially the backhand, can cause injury to the tendon. Excessive use of topspin and using a racket that's too small or heavy also can lead to injury.
- **Throwing sports**. Improper pitching technique in baseball or softball can be another culprit. Football, archery and javelin throwing also can cause golfer's elbow.
- **Weight training**. Lifting weights using improper technique, such as curling the wrists during a biceps exercise, can overload the elbow muscles and tendons.
- **Forceful, repetitive occupational movements**. These occur in fields such as construction, plumbing and carpentry

To cause golfer's elbow, the activity generally needs to be done for more than an hour a day on many days.

Risk factors

You could be at higher risk of developing golfer's elbow if you're:

- Age 40 or older
- Performing repetitive activity at least two hours a day
- Obese

- A smoker

Prevention

You can take steps to prevent golfer's elbow:

- **Strengthen your forearm muscles**. Use light weights or squeeze a tennis ball. Even simple exercises can help your muscles absorb the energy of sudden physical stress.
- **Stretch before your activity**. Warm up your muscles with some simple wrist rotations, bends and flexes. Then do gentle stretches before you begin your activity (whether that be a round of golf or a day's work using your hands).
- **Fix your form**. Whatever your sport, ask an instructor to check your form to avoid overload on muscles. If at work, ask the H&S or Occ' Health team to look at your performance of the task with the respective tools, to ensure you are using them in the most efficient way to reduce the chance of injury.
- **Use the right equipment**. If you're using older golfing irons, consider upgrading to lighter graphite clubs. If you play tennis, make sure your racket fits you. A racket with a small grip or a heavy head may increase the risk of elbow problems. If it is work equipment, ensure it is in good condition and fit for purpose.
- **Lift properly**. When lifting anything — including free weights — keep your wrist rigid and stable to reduce the force to your elbow.
- **Know when to rest**. Try not to overuse your elbow. At the first sign of elbow pain, take a break. Relative rest is an excellent aid to reducing any chronic injury. When you can rest your forearms, do so!

Diagnosis

Golfer's elbow is usually diagnosed based on your medical history and a physical examination. To evaluate pain and stiffness, the doctor might apply pressure to the affected area or ask you to move your elbow, wrist and fingers in various ways.

A sports and exercise therapist will usually carry out the same as above but also use some very specific tests to help confirm the diagnosis.

An X-ray can help the doctor rule out other causes of elbow pain, such as a fracture or arthritis. Rarely, more comprehensive imaging studies — such as MRI — are performed.

Treatment

Treatment should begin as early as possible; an injury management plan will greatly reduce the time to full recovery.

Medication

You can take an over-the-counter pain reliever, but you should check with your GP if you are not sure about allergies to medicines. Ibuprofen and Neurofen are both anti-inflammatory/pain relief medications; both can be taken orally or as a gel massaged over the site of pain.

Injury Management

Immediately the pain commences, begin the following:

- **Protect.** Immediately take any load off of the elbow and cease all activity (if safe to do so).
- **Rest.** Put your golf game or other repetitive activities on hold until the pain is gone. If you return to activity too soon, you can worsen your condition.
- **Ice the affected area.** Apply ice packs to your elbow for ten minutes at a time, three to four times a day for several days. To protect your skin, wrap the ice packs in a thin towel. It might help to massage your inner elbow with ice for five minutes at a time, two to three times a day.
- **Compression (Use a brace).** Your sports and exercise therapist may recommend that you wear a counterforce brace on your affected arm, which might reduce tendon and muscle strain.
- **Stretch and strengthen the affected area.** After 48 hours of resting and icing the injured elbow, allowing the site of pain to settle down, your sports and exercise therapist will suggest exercises for stretching and strengthening. Progressive loading of the tendon with

specific strength training exercises has been shown to be especially effective. Other physical or occupational therapy practices can be helpful too.

Gradually return to your usual activities. When your pain is gone, practice the arm motions of your sport or activity. Review your golf or tennis swing with an instructor to ensure that your technique is correct, and make adjustments if needed.

We can help you

Contact us to make an online or in clinic appointment. With early injury management, we can progress you safely and quickly through the exercise rehabilitation and conditioning to return you to your activity as quickly as possible.

You can contact us today:

Tel: +44 (0)77 863 34567

Email: info@cksportsinjury.co.uk

Or visit our website and click on the 'Contact Us' button.

Don't put up with pain and movement impairment. Let us get you pain free and able to enjoy life once more.