

# Elbow Tendonitis Information

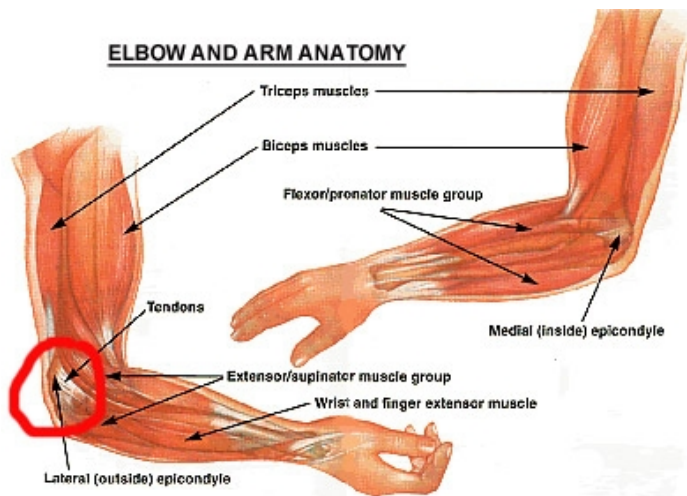
Elbow tendonitis is the inflammation, swelling and irritation of the tendons in the elbow area. Most of the pain and irritation of elbow tendonitis is felt close to the elbow area at the end of the tendon. This pain is often felt during or after activity (such as playing tennis or working on a production line) but may be felt constantly throughout the day as the condition worsens.

## Why Elbow Tendonitis Develops

There are several reasons why you might develop elbow tendonitis. The first, and the most common, is overuse of the tendon during work, sport or physical activity. Factory workers commonly develop elbow tendonitis while working on factory lines due to the repetitive and manual nature of their job. Elbow tendonitis is also common amongst tennis players, squash players and golfers. As we age tendons lose their elasticity and become brittle. This means that elderly people are prone to developing elbow tendonitis.

## The Elbow Anatomy

The elbow is basically a hinge joint allowing us to extend and contract our arms. The diagram below shows a detailed picture of the elbow and arm anatomy. You can see in the arm on the left the tendons running down the back of the elbow. It's this group of tendons that becomes inflamed with elbow tendonitis.



## Causes of Elbow Tendonitis

Elbow tendonitis can be caused by a number of factors. Here are some common causes:

1. Sudden increase in the intensity of exercise, movement or activity.
2. Rapid increase in the frequency or training or exercise.
3. Repetitive movement of the elbow over a prolonged period.
4. Poor conditioning of the elbow (in other words, training above the limitations of your body).
5. Old age (the tendon becomes brittle and prone to injury)
6. As a result of injury.
7. Genetic abnormalities (very rare).

Elbow tendonitis is often associated with racket sports like tennis or squash, but in actual fact they only make up around 10% of elbow tendonitis cases. Most elbow tendonitis conditions develop at work, in particular in people who work in factories.

## Common Symptoms

It's very important that you know and recognize elbow tendonitis symptoms early. In most cases if the condition is diagnosed and treated early enough it will heal fully without the need to see a doctor. Here is a list of elbow tendonitis symptoms:

1. Pain felt when extending the arm during and/or after exercise or activity. This pain is usually felt at the back of the elbow where the tendon meets the elbow joint.
2. Inflammation on the elbow area
3. You may feel a burning or hot sensation around the affected area. This is most common after exercise or activity.
4. Pain at night and first thing in the morning.
5. Stiffness when trying to bend the elbow against resistance. In severe cases, this stiffness may be felt every time you try to bend the elbow (without resistance).

Usually the first elbow tendonitis symptom you will feel will be pain behind your elbow joint (where the tendon meets the elbow) during or after activity. This is a sign that tendonitis is developing. Even if the pain is only slight, you should apply R.I.C.E treatment (see treatment section below) to the area.

## Treating Elbow Tendonitis

The goal of elbow tendonitis treatment is to reduce inflammation and relieve pain. In most cases, elbow tendonitis can be treated using a combination of rest, inactivity and common pain relievers. Here are the steps you should take if you start to develop elbow tendonitis:

1. Apply R.I.C.E treatment. RICE stands for rest, ice, compression, elevation. Basically, this means rest your elbow and apply ice to relieve pain and reduce inflammation in the area.
2. You may use over the counter pain relievers if necessary.
3. If the symptoms allow, apply light stretching and non-impact aerobic conditioning. This should be approached with caution. If you still feel any symptoms, rest longer.
4. Apply light resistance and strengthening exercises
5. Slowly return back to exercise and activity.

In most cases if you follow the steps mentioned above, and give your elbow plenty of rest, the tendonitis should heal. If you return to activity and the symptoms develop again, you may have not had enough rest. Rest longer and repeat the treatment steps again. If you do this and you still develop elbow tendonitis symptoms it's time to consult your doctor for further treatment options.

Your doctor will examine the area and may then order some tests such as X-rays, MRI or ultrasound. You may be prescribed medication for the pain and inflammation. In more severe cases, weak steroid injections may be given to help rebuild strength in the area.

## Prevention Options

There are several measures you can take to help prevent elbow tendonitis developing. It's important that you warm up and stretch before exercise or activity. If you work in a factory or manual job, you should do some light warm up and stretching exercises before you start work and return to work after breaks.

Not training above your body's ability during exercise is also important. You must build up to intense and frequent training, not jump straight into it.

And finally, you should always cool down and stretch after exercise. This helps the tendons stay more elastic and improves flexibility. The more flexible you are, the less likely you are to develop elbow tendonitis.