

## TENNIS ELBOW-WHAT IT IS AND HOW TO GET IT BETTER! By Larry M. Bridge DC

Tennis elbow or lateral epicondylitis (outside of the elbow with palm of hand forward) is a painful condition of the tendons that attach muscles in the forearm to the elbow. (Medial epicondylitis or Golfers elbow is associated with pain on the inside of the elbow). It affects up to 3% of the population usually between 30-50 years of age, with 75% occurring on the dominant side. Fifty percent of all tennis players develop this sometime in their careers. Even though this is called tennis elbow many people get this from doing repetitive motion type work.

WHO GETS IT-carpenters, factory workers, painters, computer users and anyone who uses their hands and forearm to perform tasks repetitively. As a chiropractor having successfully treated over 200 cases of tennis elbow most of the cases I have treated were caused by jobs requiring repetitive hand and arm work.

SYMPTOMS- The main symptoms are elbow and forearm pain and weakness. Swelling may be present and grip strength may be decreased. Most experience pain on the bony portion (lateral/medial epicondyle) of the outside/inside of the elbow.

COMMON CAUSES-The most common causes are overuse of the forearm and wrist muscles, direct trauma or the position of your arm during sleep which can cause shortened forearm muscles and degeneration of the tendons (micro-tears) where they attach to the elbow.

TREATMENTS-Treatments can be broken down into three categories, self treatments, medical treatment and integrated treatment. Some cases resolve with self care based treatment while over 95% improve without surgical intervention.

### SELF TREATMENTS-

- >Cessation, reduction or modification of activities that cause elbow pain
- >Tennis elbow brace. Worn 1 to 2 inches below the elbow.
- >Tennis elbow stretches, hold your arm at your side roll your wrist and fingers up into a ball and roll your wrist, arm and hand counterclockwise (roll into your body). Hold for 15 seconds 8-10 times per day.
- >Elbow forearm self-massage (preferably w/ ice cup)
- > Ice pack 8-10 minutes 2-3 times per day.

### MEDICAL TREATMENTS

- >NSAIDs-these are over the counter and or prescription anti-inflammatory drugs. They can be helpful in the short term but may inhibit the healing process in the long term.
- >Steroid injections-can be helpful but fail to treat the cause, shortened/weakened muscles\tendons.
- >Surgery-treatment of last resort, tendon release or repair surgery.

### INTEGRATED TREATMENTS

- CMT- Chiropractic manipulative therapy of the wrist and elbow insuring proper joint mechanics (this alone sometimes resolves elbow pain)
- Myofascial release/deep tissue techniques to break-up adhesions and scar tissue in the muscles of the forearm and elbow.
- Elbow taping/bracing to support the damaged tissue and speed healing
- Cold laser therapy has show to be highly effective for reducing pain and speeding healing
- Ultrasound/Electrical Stimulation to reduce pain and inflammation

If you have acute or chronic elbow pain try modifying the activities that increase your symptoms. If the pain/problem persists see a Chiropractor that treats extremities (elbows, wrists, shoulders, knees, ankles, feet). You don't have to suffer with elbow pain; it is something that is routinely helped with the proper care. More information on tennis elbow and treatment will be on my website.

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