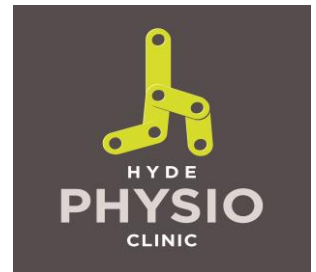


Patient information leaflet



Tennis elbow (lateral epicondylalgia)

This leaflet has information and advice on how to manage your tennis elbow. If you have any queries or concerns, please contact your GP.

What is tennis elbow?

Tennis elbow is a condition that results in pain around the outside of your elbow. Around your elbow you have a collection of muscles, ligaments, tendons and bone; an injury to the muscles is what causes the pain.

Mechanism of injury

You may develop tennis elbow for a variety of reasons. It is most commonly seen in the working population, and most people experience symptoms on their dominant side. It may result from the repetitive overuse of your elbow, for example by doing the same movement over and over again which results in stress in the muscle, occasionally causing micro tears which may lead to pain.

Symptoms

You may develop pain in and around your elbow, in particular it may be uncomfortable around the outside of your elbow and forearm. Other symptoms you may experience include pain on gripping, lifting or repetitive wrist activity. You may also find that the stiffness is eased with gentle movement.

Management

- **Ice:** a cold pack (ice pack or frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel) can provide short-term pain relief. Apply this to the sore area for up to 15 minutes, every three hours and up to four times a day, ensuring the ice is never in direct contact with the skin.
- **Relative rest:** reduce activities that are making your symptoms worse, for example, the length of time you use your hand and elbow.
- **Painkillers:** pain relief can help manage the discomfort in the short term. Normally painkillers bought from a pharmacist will work. If you have any questions please speak to a pharmacist.
- **Splint:** if your symptoms are not improving then you may benefit from a wrist splint, these will look to reduce the load through your elbow. You can get one of these from a pharmacy or online.
- **Exercise:** you should complete specific exercises that aim to increase the strength of your arm; this will help you return to activities. Please see below for suggestions of a graded exercise programme. Follow-up You do not routinely require physiotherapy for this type of

injury, most find they improve with time and simple exercises. If your elbow pain does not improve after 6 to 12 weeks, then you may benefit from physiotherapy. We recommend you contact your GP to refer you to your local physiotherapy department. Healing This type of injury can take approximately 6 to 9 months to resolve.

What to expect

Weeks since injury	Rehabilitation plan
0 to 1 weeks	✓ Use ice and elevation to help swelling ✓ Begin the 'Stage one exercises' on page 3 ✓ Follow the management advice as per above
2 to 5 weeks	✓ Once your pain has begun to settle, start the exercises below labelled 'Stage two exercises'.
6 to 12 weeks	✓ Once you are able to complete 'Stage two exercises' then progress onto the next stage. You may be able to progress onto these earlier than 6 weeks if your pain has reduced, sometimes it can take longer than 6 weeks to progress. ✗ If, after 6 weeks, you are struggling with any of the following please contact your GP for an assessment and possible referral to your local physiotherapy department.

Initial advice

Cold packs

A cold pack (ice pack or frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel) can provide short term pain relief. Apply this to the sore area for up to 15 minutes, every few hours ensuring the ice is never in direct contact with the skin.

Rest

Try to rest the elbow for the first 24 to 72 hours (1 to 3 days) if it is particularly painful.

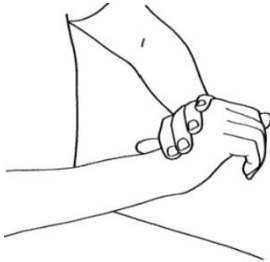
Early movement and exercise

Early weight bearing (putting weight through your injured limb) helps increase the speed of healing. Try to carry out your daily activities as normally as possible as this will help with your recovery.

Stage one (3 to 4 times a day)

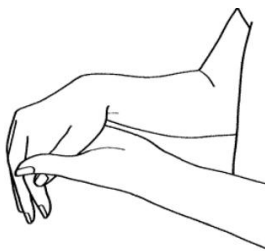
Sustained muscle holds (isometric exercise)

Pushing up



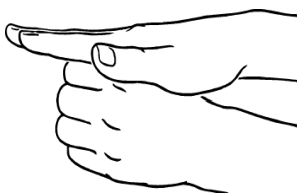
Make a fist with the hand on the side of your painful elbow. Using your other hand, apply pressure downwards onto your fist, whilst pushing upwards with your fist at the same time. Neither hand should move. Hold for 10 to 20 seconds, you will feel the muscles in your wrist and arm working. Rest for 30 seconds and then repeat twice more.

Pushing down



Make a fist with the hand on the side of your painful elbow. Using your other hand, apply pressure upwards onto your fist, whilst pushing downwards with your fist at the same time. Neither hand should move. Hold for 10 to 20 seconds, you will feel the muscles in your wrist and are working. Rest for 30 seconds and then repeat twice more.

Pushing to the side



Make a fist with the hand on the side of your painful elbow. Using your other hand, apply pressure onto the side your fist and push sideways into your hand with your fist at the same time. Neither hand should move. Hold for 10 to 20 seconds, you will feel the muscles in your wrist and arm working. Rest for 30 seconds and then repeat twice more.

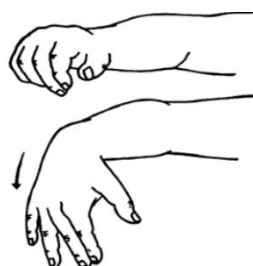
Do this pushing outwards and inwards.

Stage 2 (4 to 5 times a day)

Moving wrist down to neutral Make a fist with your hand, with your knuckles facing upwards.

Keeping your wrist in a neutral position. Drop your fist downwards as if doing a knocking action, and then lift back to the starting position.

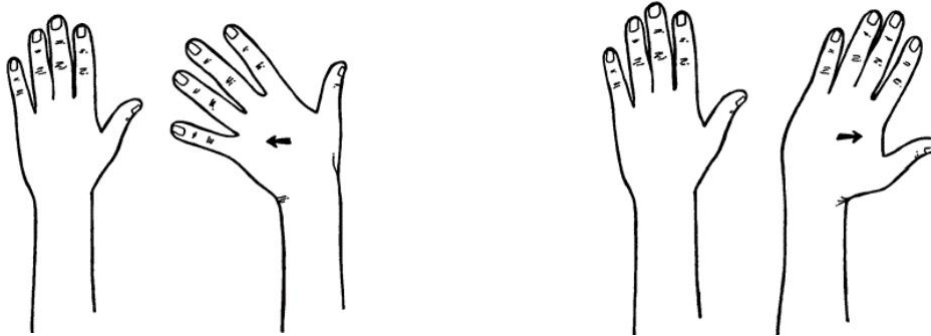
Try not to lift your fist higher than the neutral starting position. Repeat 12 times, rest for 30 to 45 seconds and repeat twice more.



Rest your forearm on a table. Have your hand and fingers flat. Move your wrist so that your thumb

comes inwards towards your body, and then return back to the starting position.

Repeat 12 times, rest for 30 to 45 seconds and repeat twice more.



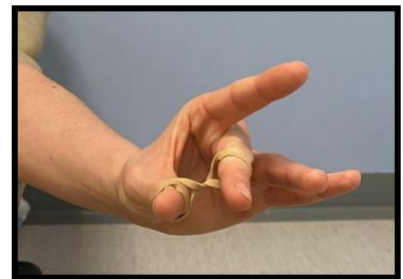
Middle finger raise with elastic band

Put an elastic band around your thumb and middle finger. Ensure there is some tension in the band but it is not too tightly wrapped around your finger or thumb.

Keeping your thumb still, lift your middle finger up and down 8 to 12 times.

You should feel the muscles working in your forearm. Rest for 30 to

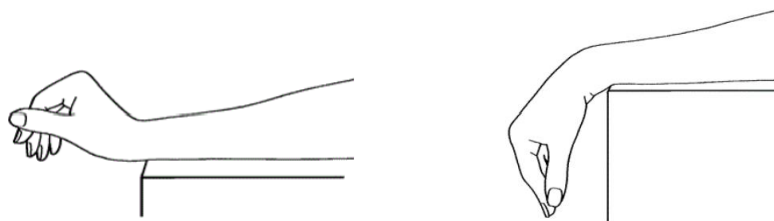
45 seconds and repeat twice more.



Stage 3 exercises to do once a day

To start once you can comfortably complete stage 2 exercises.

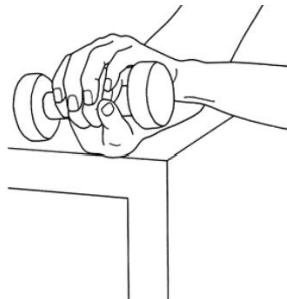
Moving wrist up and down.



Make a fist with the hand on the side of your painful elbow with your knuckles facing upwards, keeping your wrist in a neutral position. Drop your fist downwards as if doing a knocking action, and then lift your wrist all the way up so that it passes neutral. You should aim to move through the whole range of your wrist. Repeat 12 times, rest for 30 to 45 seconds and repeat twice more.

Support your forearm on a table with your palm facing down. Using a tin of beans or a small weight.

Bend your wrist up assisting the movement with your other hand. Take hold of the weights and slowly lower your hand down without assistance from the other hand. Remove the weight before you lift your hand back to neutral.



Repeat 10 times rest for 30 to 45 seconds and repeat twice more.

Stage 4 exercises to do once a day

Moving wrist up and down with a small weight

Hold a small weight such as a can of beans or water bottle with the hand on the side of your painful elbow with your knuckles facing upwards, keeping your wrist in a neutral position. Drop your fist downwards as if doing a knocking action, and then lift your wrist all the way up so that it passes neutral. You should aim to move through the whole range of your wrist.



Repeat 12 times, rest for 30 to 45 seconds and repeat twice more.

Moving wrist from side to side

Rest your forearm on a table. Hold a small weight in your hand such as a can of beans or water bottle, with the palm of your hand facing to the floor. Move your wrist so that your thumb comes inwards towards your body, and then return back to the starting position.



Repeat 12 times, rest for 30 to 45 seconds and repeat twice more.

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Disclaimer

Please note this is a generic information sheet. If you have specific questions about how this relates to your pain, please ask your doctor or MSK practitioner. If these exercises, make you pain drastically worse or your symptoms don't improve. Please stop them and review with your health professional.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact Hyde Physiotherapy Centre – Tel: 0161 368339 or by email at:

hydephysio.hydephysio@nhs.net

All exercises and advice suggested on this handout are undertaken at the risk of the individual.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:
Hyde Physiotherapy Clinicians have all agreed to this information leaflet.

Next review date March 2027.