



Orthopaedic Surgery  
& Sports Medicine

## Medial epicondylitis (golfer's elbow)

### Description

Medial epicondylitis is characterized by inflammation and pain on the inner side of the elbow where the muscles and tendons attach to the bone. The structures involved are the muscles and tendons of the forearm that bring your wrist toward your body (flex the wrist). This occurs not only in golfers but anyone who performs repeated resisted motions of the wrist. Without proper intervention, this may develop into a chronic problem.

### Common signs and symptoms

- Pain and tenderness on the inner side of the elbow
- Pain or weakness with gripping activities
- Pain with twisting motions of the wrist, such as using a screwdriver, playing golf, or bowling

### Causes

- Chronic, repetitive stress and strain to the muscles and tendons of the wrist and forearm to the elbow
- Sudden strain of the forearm, including wrist snap and serving balls with racquet sports or throwing a baseball

### Risk of further injury

- Sports or occupations that require repetitive and strenuous forearm and wrist movements
- Poor physical conditioning (strength and flexibility)
- Inadequate warm-up before practice or play
- Resumption of activity before healing and rehabilitation or conditioning is complete

### Initial treatment:

Initial treatment consists of medications and ice to relieve pain; stretching and strengthening exercises of the wrist flexor and extensor muscles (grip strength); rest; and modification of the activity that initially caused the problem. These can all be carried out at home for acute cases, although referral to a physical therapist or athletic trainer for further evaluation and treatment may be recommended. An injection of cortisone to the area around the tendon may be recommended. Gradual return to activity is allowed after symptoms are resolved.

### Medication

Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications such as aspirin and ibuprofen (do not take within 7 days before surgery), or other minor pain relievers such as acetaminophen, are often recommended. Take these as directed by your physician. Contact your physician immediately if any bleeding, stomach upset, or signs of an allergic reaction occur. Topical ointments may be of benefit. Pain relievers may be prescribed as necessary by your physician. Use only as directed and only as much as you need.

**Heat and cold**

- Cold is used to relieve pain and reduce inflammation for acute and chronic cases. Cold should be applied for 10 to 15 minutes every 2 to 3 hours for inflammation and pain and immediately after any activity that aggravates your symptoms. Use ice packs or an ice massage. Cold should be applied for the first 72 hours after initial injury.
- Heat may be used before performing stretching and strengthening activities prescribed by your physician, physical therapist, or athletic trainer. Use a heat pack or a warm soak. **Do not use** heat if inflammation (swelling) is present.

Please call **859-323-5533** with questions or for more information.