



WHAT IS TENNIS ELBOW?

Tennis elbow is also known as lateral epicondylitis or common extensor tendinopathy. Tendons are structures that attach a muscle to bone and in the case of tennis elbow the extensor muscle group attach via a common tendon to the outside of the elbow (lateral epicondyle).

Tennis elbow is classified by overuse of the tendon that leads to disrepair and degeneration.

INJURY FACTS:

Although given the name tennis elbow due to its association with overuse during a tennis backhand, this condition is common during everyday activities including gripping sports, painting and working with hand tools.

Tennis elbow may be classified into the following stages:

1. *Reactive tendinopathy* which refers to a rapid increase in loading;
2. *Tendon disrepair* often follows a reactive tendinopathy if the tendon continues to be excessively loaded;
3. *Degenerative tendinopathy* represents the response of the common elbow extensor tendon to chronic overloading.

MECHANISM OF INJURY:

The patient may report an increased in load on the tendon, which may come from increased hours and more days per week completing a gripping task. Tennis elbow can often be associated with a rapid increase in activity that isn't regular e.g. spending a weekend painting the house, spending all weekend in a garden with a change in seasons or going water skiing after a couple of years break.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:

- Painful elbow over the common tendon;
- Pain during everyday activities;
- Trigger points in forearm muscles;
- Tightness through the forearm muscles;
- Decreased grip strength;
- Pain when carry items e.g. shopping bags.
- Pain with gripping tasks;





DIAGNOSIS:

An extensive subjective history will guide the physiotherapist in the correct direction for diagnosis. The physiotherapist will also look for area of pain, muscles tightness and weakness, joint mobility and often test for aggravating activities. Pain will often occur on resisting wrist and middle digit extension and pain and decreased strength may be present when testing grip strength.

Tendon compromise will be seen on MRI or US in the way of tendon thickening, swelling and disorganisation of the tendon.

PHYSIOTHERAPY TREATMENT OPTIONS:

- Exercise prescription including concentric and eccentric programs;
- Biomechanical analysis and correction
- Electrotherapy
- Hydrotherapy program
- Dry needling
- Joint mobilization
- Taping
- Education
- Deep tissue massage
- Tool and equipment modification.

