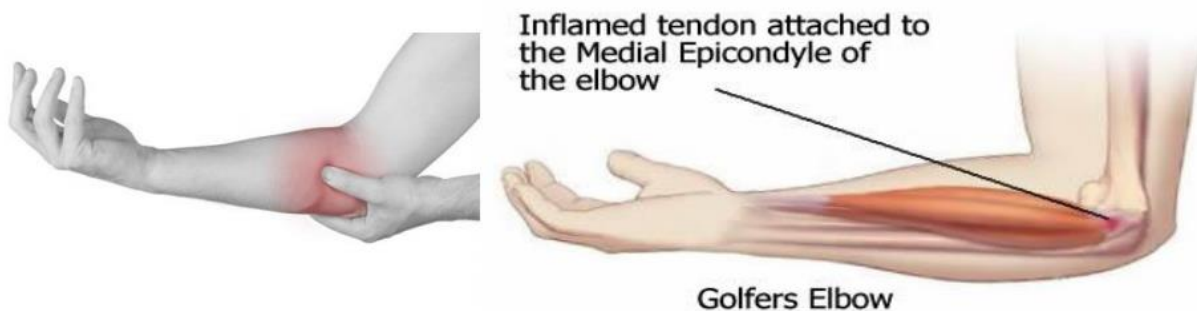# Golfer's Elbow

The elbow joint has many muscles attaching in front, behind and either side that help bend and straighten the elbow but also help to turn the forearm and wrist so you can have your palm facing up or down or twist objects. Many of the muscles that attach either side of the elbow also run down the length of the forearm and help move the wrist and fingers.

The muscles are attached to the bone either end by strong tough bands of fibrous connective tissue known as the tendons.

Golfer's elbow is the most common cause of pain on the inside of the elbow and is a condition where you experience pain coming from the tendons that attach the muscles to the inner aspect of the elbow. These muscles help to bend the hand forwards and rotate the forearm so the palm faces down. Pain is normally felt over the inside of the elbow and sometimes down the forearm to the wrist.

Anyone can develop golfer's elbow, but it normally occurs in people between the ages of 40 to 60 years old. Less than 1% of the population is affected and this is much less common than tennis elbow.

Inflamed tendon attached to the Medial Epicondyle of the elbow

Golfers Elbow

What Causes the Pain?

Golfer's elbow is an 'overuse tendinopathy' and can be caused by putting too much load or overusing the muscles and tendons that flex the wrist or turn the palm down.

Tendons do change over time and for many people these changes will never cause pain when they are used. When tendons do become painful, however, the symptoms normally appear gradually and become more noticeable over time. For some, the tendon pain can come on very suddenly and is often due to a sudden change in activity. Sometimes there is no obvious cause.

What are the main symptoms of tennis elbow?

- Pain when pressing over the inside of the elbow that can radiate into the inner forearm.
- Pain when bending the wrist or turning the palm down against resistance.
- Pain when grasping objects, shaking hands, or opening a jar for example.

- Stiffness might be felt in the elbow, and making a fist might hurt.
- You might feel weakness in your hand and wrist.

How Long Will it Take to Get Better?

Golfer's elbow can last between 6 months and 2 years. Most people recover in a year.

How Can I Help Myself?

- **Using the elbow will not cause damage,** although it is best to try and change the way you are using it. Resting the elbow from the activities that cause pain may help.

- **Placing ice over the painful area** by using a small bag of frozen peas wrapped in a damp tea towel for 10 to 15 minutes 3 to 4 times a day.

- **Changing your workstation or the tools you are using** may help to improve your pain. Using a thumb mouse for computer work may help. Keep your workstation or tools you are using close to your body so that your arm is not stretched out away from your body.

- **Try to lift objects with your palms facing upwards and the elbow bent.** Avoid gripping objects between your thumb and first finger.

- **Wearing a golfer's elbow support or strap may be helpful.** Elbow supports do not need to be worn all the time, but mainly when carrying out the activities that cause pain.

- **Sometimes wearing a wrist splint may help reduce pain.**

- **Over the counter pain killers** may be helpful and local creams that you can buy from the chemist. Your pharmacist can provide expert help and advice.

Self Treatment
(this can be under the guidance of a physiotherapist or other qualified healthcare provider if required)

Generally golfer's elbow is a condition that improves by itself with time.
There are, however strengthening exercises and stretches that can help to improve the pain around the elbow. These improve the strength of the muscle but importantly they improve the quality of the tendon tissue.

1. **Rotation (pronation/supination) exercise**: Bend the elbow of your injured arm 90 degrees, keeping your elbow at your side. Turn your palm up and hold for 5 seconds. Then slowly turn your palm down and hold for 5 seconds. Make sure you keep your elbow at your side and bent 90 degrees while you do the exercise. Do this exercise slowly 12 times, rest for a minute and then repeat 2 more sets.
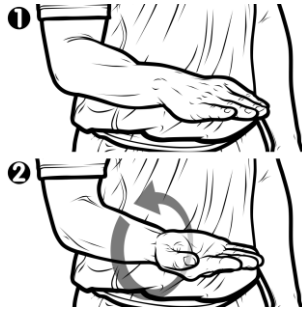
To make the exercise harder hold a broomstick in your hand in an upright position, elbow bent to 90degress and at your side.
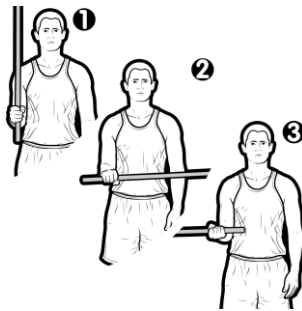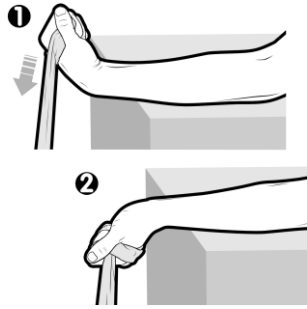

2. **Static strength exercise**: Rest your forearm on the edge of a table with your hand over the end of the table and the palm facing upwards. Use your other hand to push the hand down. Keep the wrist still by tensing and using the muscles in the forearm. Hold the position for 15 seconds and repeat 5 times. Increase the length of time you hold the position gradually until you are holding the position for 45 seconds repeated 5 times.
You can also use the table to resist the movement if this is easier.

3. **Wrist flexion exercise:** your forearm can rest flat on a table or your thigh with your hand, palm up, over the edge. You can hold a can of food or a small weight in the hand to add some resistance to the exercise as appropriate. Alternatively you can fix a length of resistance band under your foot and grasp the other end in your hand. Raise your hand as high as you can (1). Slowly lower your hand (a 4 second count) into wrist extension (2). Repeat 8 times, rest and repeat for 4 sets.

Sussex MSK Partnership is brought together by

Here   Sussex Community **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust

4. **Stretch**: While keeping your elbow straight, extend your wrist as far as you can. With your opposite hand, pull your wrist further into extension until you feel a stretch. You should feel a stretch along the front of your forearm. Hold this position for 15 seconds and repeat 3 times.
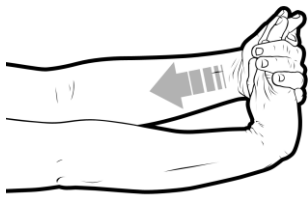
Other Treatments

Steroid injections are no longer recommended for golfer's elbow pain. Studies suggest that the injections often reduce pain for a few weeks, but the pain often returns and can be worse than before the injection. Over a 1 to 2 year period it has been shown that patients that have had steroid injections tend to have a worse outcome than those who have had no treatment at all.

Surgery

Very few people need to have surgery for golfer's elbow. This would only be considered if no treatment has helped with the pain and it is seen as the only other option.