



Lateral Epicondylitis (a.k.a. “Tennis Elbow”)

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Lateral epicondylitis, more commonly known as tennis elbow, is one of the three most common work-related upper extremity disorders. However, this condition does not develop only as a result of playing tennis. Tennis elbow is the result of repetitive activity (such as repetitive wrist extension) and forceful activities (such as gripping and pushing/pulling). These activities can cause inflammation of the tendons that join the forearm muscles along the lateral aspect of the elbow leaving you with mild to severe pain along the dorsal (upper) forearm and an increasingly weaker grip.

When the pain worsens or begins to interfere with daily activities, most individuals seek medical attention. Since this condition develops gradually, it will also improve gradually if the correct treatment is rendered. Most physicians will prescribe a high dose anti-inflammatory and will refer you to your local hand therapist for a bout of physical/occupational therapy. The plan of care for such a dysfunction will usually require 2-3 appointments per week with your therapist for up to 4 weeks.

Types of treatments may vary depending on the severity of your symptoms as well as whether the condition is chronic or acute. Acute tennis elbow is most often treated with modalities for decreasing inflammation such as hot/cold compresses, iontophoresis, stretching, and manual soft tissue mobilization. Chronic tennis elbow usually requires more of a rigorous routine involving a deeper soft tissue mobilization technique designed to further inflame the tendons involved in order to promote healthy healing along with splinting of the elbow and wrist.

Regardless of the treatment regimen followed, once your pain is managed, a series of strengthening exercises will help you to return to full work/recreational activities with less of a chance for recurring symptoms. Despite the name of this condition, tennis elbow involves the entire upper extremity in one way or another, therefore, early intervention is key.

Call the KORT location nearest you for effective, evidence-based treatment of lateral epicondylitis (tennis elbow).