

Medial Elbow Pain (Golfer's Elbow)

What is Medial Elbow Pain (Golfer's Elbow)

Golfer's elbow, also known as medial epicondylitis, is a condition which causes pain around the inside (medial) bony part of the elbow and can radiate down into the forearm. People of any age can get golfer's elbow but it mainly affects people between the ages of 40 and 60, with males and females equally affected.

What Causes Medial Elbow Pain?

A number of muscles attach to the inside of the elbow which move your hand and wrist. These muscles attach to the bone via a tendon and it is the tendon that becomes painful in Golfers Elbow. This pain can occur as a result of a specific injury to the tendon but is more often the result of overuse. This is usually due to repetitive strain from activities that involve gripping, rotating your arm and flexing your wrist. These repeated movements can strain the tendons around the inside of your elbow causing pain.

Symptoms:

Some common symptoms of golfer's elbow are:

- Pain on the inside of the elbow just below the bend of the elbow
- Pain radiating into the forearm down to the wrist
- Difficulty lifting or bending your arm
- Difficulty with twisting movements e.g. turning a door handle or opening jars
- Difficulty with gripping due to pain
- The inside of the elbow can be painful to touch

Treatment:

Golfer's elbow may take weeks or months to settle. This can depend on how long symptoms have been present and whether you are able to avoid or reduce the activities/movements which aggravate your elbow pain.

- Exercise therapy is most effective at reducing pain and improving function (See exercise section)
- Orthotics (such as an epi-clasp) can be effective in the short term.
- Acupuncture has been shown to have limited effects.
- Ultrasound has no effect.
- Steroid injection can reduce pain in the short term but can damage the tendon in the long term.
- Research shows there is only a 60-70% chance of surgery helping to improve symptoms.

Exercises:

- For most people the exercise programme below will reduce pain from golfers elbow but it takes time and commitment.
- It may take up to 6 weeks to see a significant improvement and around 12 weeks for it to completely resolve. For some people it can take longer than this.
- It is important that you exercise at the right level for you.
- Your pain levels will help guide this: you should feel some discomfort during the exercise but this must be acceptable to you and any discomfort should not last more than 30 mins after the exercise.
- If an exercise significantly increases your pain you can modify it, as described in the instructions, or go back a stage.
- If you still experience significant pain stop and discuss this with your physiotherapist

Stage 1 - Isometric strengthening exercises:

Isometric exercises are a type strength training that causes a **gentle** static contraction of the muscle. These exercises need to be repeated several times a day. When these become easy progress to stage two

Isometric wrist flexion



Picture courtesy of Physiotec

Rest the forearm of the involved arm on the arm of a chair with the hand palm up. Place your other hand on top. Keeping your forearm rested on the arm of the chair and try to bend your wrist against the resistance of your top hand.

Push gently (low to moderate effort)

Hold for a 40-50 seconds. Repeat 4-5 times

If this is too painful: push more gently or try holding for a shorter duration

Isometric wrist pronation



Start by bending your elbow and turn your palm up.

Put your free hand in your working hand to provide a resistance.

With the lower arm (working arm), try to turn your palm down by twisting the forearm and resist the movement with the top hand. Try to keep the fingers of your working arm relaxed and keep the elbow still.

Push gently (low to moderate intensity)

Hold for a 40-50 seconds. Repeat 4-5 times

If this is too painful: push more gently or try holding for a shorter duration

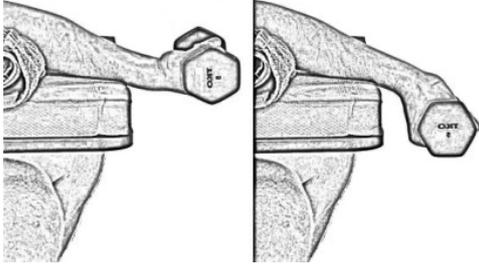


Picture courtesy of Physiotec

Stage 2 – Strengthening Exercises:

Once pain has slightly settled you can progress to work on strengthening the tendon through movement. This can improve pain, power and function.

Wrist Flexion/Extension



Picture courtesy of Physiotec

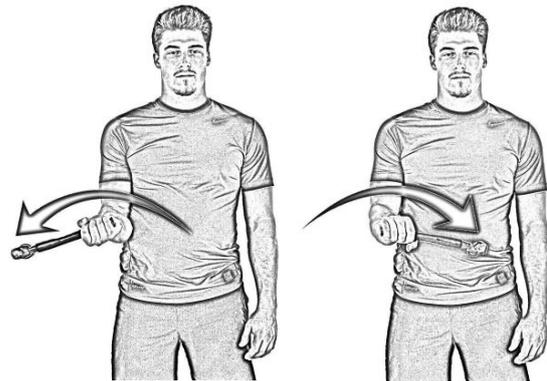
Hold a small weight in your hand (try a tin of beans to begin with) and rest your forearm on a table so your wrist is over the edge, palm facing up.

Bend at the wrist to lift the weight as high as possible, while keeping your forearm on the table. Then slowly lower the weight completely.

Repeat 10 times but aim to gradually increase to 30 times.

If this is too painful: try a smaller weight or reduce the number of repetitions. You can also make the movement smaller to begin with but increase as your pain allows

Wrist Pronation/Supination



Picture courtesy of Physiotec

Hold a hammer, a weighted stick or any similar object that has a long lever.

Start with your palm facing up and slowly turn your palm to face down.

Repeat 10 times but aim to gradually increase to 30 times.

If this is too painful: try a smaller weight or reduce the number of repetitions. You can also make the movement smaller to begin with but increase as your pain allows

Other things to try:

- If your elbow pain is aggravated by certain movements try to avoid these aggravating movements.
- Try lifting objects with your palm facing your body rather than gripping.
- You can try changing the grip size on objects you use such as sports rackets or tools; increasing the grip size may help to reduce the strain.
- You can also try reducing the weight of your tools or racket.
- Try and reduce time spent on repetitive activities.

The tendon can take months to settle and begin to strengthen so persevere with the exercises. If your symptoms worsen, do not improve at all after 6 weeks, or you have any other symptoms such as pins and needles or numbness down the arm into the hand, please speak to your GP/ first contact physiotherapist.

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Web Address: <http://www.cht.nhs.uk/services/clinical-services/physiotherapy-outpatients/patient-careinformation/>

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Physiotherapy Department
Huddersfield Royal Infirmary

Telephone No: 01484 342434

MSK Physiotherapy Admin Office 01484 9053

www.cht.nhs.uk

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