

I Have Tennis Elbow! But... I Don't Play Tennis!!!

Tennis elbow is a common term used to describe lateral epicondylitis, which is inflammation of the tendons near the outside of your elbow that pull your hand up (wrist extension). "Overuse can lead to micro-tears in the tendons, as they originate at the elbow, and also scar tissue, which leads to pain and limited flexibility at the wrist.



You may have difficulty with gripping, lifting the coffee pot, keyboarding, and with straightening your elbow after prolonged static positions, like sleeping, or even while at rest. Any repetitive wrist extension, whether it's clipping your rose bushes, painting, and yes, even too much tennis, can increase the risk of elbow pain.

Painful resisted wrist extension is a positive test for lateral epicondylitis. There is usually localized tenderness when palpating over the bony top of your elbow and into the forearm.

How to help yourself:

- **Reduce repeated strains**
- This could mean changing your work techniques by using tools with a larger grip or using gloves.
- You should check your work station - height of computer, and your seat, your keyboard position, and bring the mouse closer to you. The use of a head set is encouraged for phone use.
- If you are a tennis player, attempt a double-handed backhand. Play less!

- Check your posture regularly to avoid the forward head posture and take frequent breaks to stretch both your neck and forearm muscles.

2. **Stretching**

- Attempt to stretch the forearm muscles as shown above 3 x day, 3 x each side holding for 30 seconds.



3. **Anti-inflammatory techniques**

- The use of ice 2-3 x a day over the elbow for 10-15 mins will help increase circulation and assist with healing.
- The use of short-term non-steroidal anti-inflammatories, like Ibuprofen, may help.

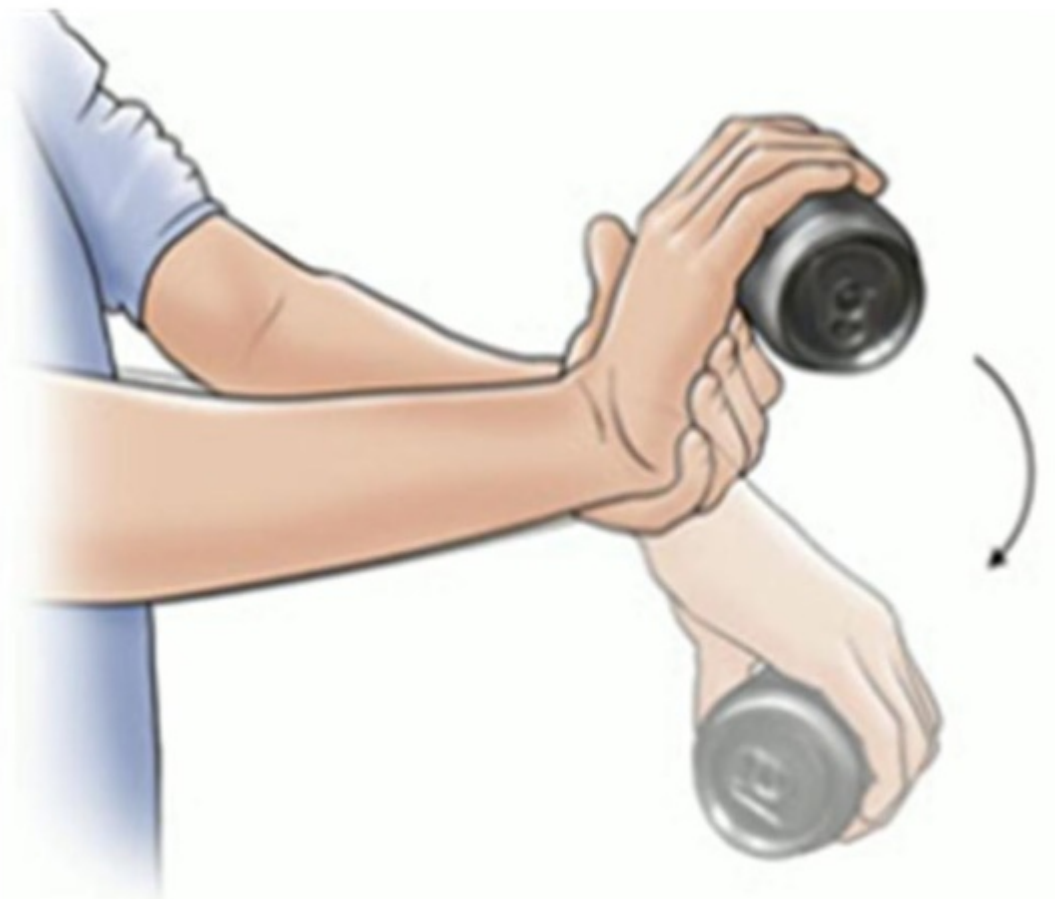
4. **Cross friction Massage**

- With the affected palm facing up, and using your opposite thumb, perform a deep, sweeping massage across approximately 1 inch of underlying soft tissue on the area shown (see photo).
- Perform for 1- 2 minutes daily. Make sure not to bruise the skin, but rather move your thumb and the skin of forearm in conjunction across the tendon structures.



5. **Eccentric exercise**

- Eccentric strengthening has been proven to be a great adjunct in reducing tendinitis symptoms.
- Use a small weight or can of food for this. Using the unaffected hand, assist extending your wrist upwards, then remove the unaffected hand, and slowly control lowering the weight downwards with the affected hand. Repeat 2-3 sets of 10, followed by stretching and icing.



Eccentric wrist extension

6. Braces and taping

- Kinesio-taping and wearing a brace can help for short- term pain relief.
- Please consider stopping in at your doctor's office and asking for a referral to physical therapy for a check-up and advice on how to relieve your lateral epicondylitis. Your physical therapist can help identify your overuse postures and address ways to decrease your symptoms.

For further assistance a Physical Therapist or Occupational Therapist can provide further assistance to guide you through your rehabilitation needs.



Debbie Kayton, PT

Debbie Kayton received her Bachelor of Science (Physiotherapy) at the University of Cape Town, South Africa in 1987. She has been working in the United States since 1991 in a variety of different in-patient and out-patient settings. She loves to play tennis!