



Tennis and golfer's elbow

You came to the emergency department with pain around your elbow. The doctor examined you and thinks it is caused by a strained tendon, known as tennis elbow or golfer's elbow. It is not dangerous and usually gets better with time and care at home.

What is it?

Tendons attach muscles to bone. Repeated gripping, lifting or twisting can strain the tendons near the elbow. Tennis elbow causes pain on the outer side of the elbow. Golfer's elbow causes pain on the inner side. You do not need to play sport to get either. The pain often lasts weeks to months, but most people recover fully.

Looking after yourself at home

- Rest from the activities that cause the pain, such as heavy gripping, lifting or twisting. Do not stop using your arm completely.
- Lift objects with your palm facing up and keep them close to your body.
- Use a cold pack wrapped in a cloth on the sore area for 15–20 minutes, a few times a day.
- When the pain settles, start gentle stretching and strengthening exercises. A physiotherapist can show you how.
- Look at how you do tasks at work, home or sport. Changes to grip, tools or technique can stop the pain coming back.
- An elbow strap worn just below the elbow may help some people.

Medicines

- Paracetamol can help with pain, unless your doctor told you not to. Follow the packet or your doctor's instructions.
- Ibuprofen tablets or gel may help, unless your doctor told you not to. Avoid tablets with a stomach ulcer, kidney disease, some asthma, or pregnancy.

Follow-up

- See your family doctor or health centre if the pain is not improving after 4–6 weeks.
- Ask your doctor about physiotherapy if the pain keeps coming back or stops you working.

Come back to the emergency department or call an ambulance straight away if:

- Your elbow becomes red, hot and swollen, especially with a fever
- You cannot bend or straighten your elbow at all
- Numbness, tingling or weakness in your hand or fingers that is getting worse
- Your hand or fingers become cold, pale or blue
- Severe pain after a fall or a sudden snap or pop at the elbow



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This leaflet is general information to support the advice your doctor or nurse gave you today. It does not replace their advice. If you are worried, seek medical help.

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