



[◀ Back](#)

Medial epicondylitis, more commonly known as golfer's elbow, and lateral epicondylitis, more commonly known as tennis elbow, are overuse syndromes of the muscles and tendons of the forearm. Golfers elbow is associated with pain on the inside of the elbow and tennis elbow is associated with pain on the outside of the elbow (inside and outside of the elbow are with respect to the elbow when the palms of your hands are facing forward). With these injuries, the pain can sometimes be felt above the elbow and it can radiate down the forearm toward the hand. The primary cause is usually overuse, leading to repetitive microtrauma of the muscles and tendons of the forearm.

These injuries are not only seen in golfers and tennis players, but are also commonly seen in carpenters, plumbers, landscapers, throwing athletes and musicians. The muscles of the forearm are predominantly used to move the hand and the fingers. The repetitive use of these muscles can cause irritation, microtears, and fibrosis of the tissues of the forearm. Continued overuse can eventually lead to rupture of the tendons. Fortunately, this is a fairly easy condition to diagnose and treat.

Diagnosis of golfers elbow and tennis elbow is usually easy since the patient typically has a history of overuse such as playing sports, working or falling. Examination of the elbow may reveal minor swelling and pain when touching the inside or outside of the elbow. When testing the strength of the muscles of the forearm, there is often weakness due to pain. Orthopedic tests of the elbow quickly reproduce the patient's pain. If the injuries are long standing, x-rays may show calcium deposits in the muscles and a MRI may show rupture of a tendon.

If an individual addresses these conditions early, they are fairly easy to treat. Resting the muscles is important so that healing may take place. Even though it is important to allow the muscles to rest, complete inactivity is counterproductive since it allows scar tissue to build up in the forearm muscles and this prevents proper healing. If someone cannot limit their activity of the affected muscles of the forearm, they can use a chopats brace. A chopats brace puts pressure on the forearm muscles and decreases the stress on the tendons, thus allowing them to heal. Ice and medication can decrease the inflammation/pain in the tendons and muscles. Manual therapies such as Active Release Techniques, and manipulation are important for breaking down scar tissue build up and for stimulating proper healing. Manually moving the muscles and tendons in specific ways stimulates the healing process and improves healing. Stretching and later strengthening the muscles of the forearm allows the tissues to regain their original length and strength so an individual can return to their normal activities. Addressing the strength of an individual's shoulder and upper back is often important in preventing continued overload of the forearm muscles. For those individuals

using tools or sporting equipment, it is extremely important that the tools or equipment fit their hand properly. Continued use of a tennis racquet or a golf club with too big or small of a handle or a hammer that weighs too much will only cause recurrence of the injury. Golfers and tennis players should have their swings analyzed by a knowledgeable individual to make sure their mechanics are proper. Throwing athletes should have their throwing mechanics reviewed by their coach.

For those individuals with significant pain, which is not decreased with those treatments discussed above, a cortisone injection can decrease the pain in the elbow and can be given in conjunction with the above treatments. If an individual has suffered a rupture of a tendon, this can only be repaired surgically. Usually, golfers elbow and tennis elbow can be treated without an injection or surgery.

Newtown Performance Chiropractic
153 South Main Street, Newtown, CT 06470 (203) 426-6600 or (203)
417-3375