

# Tennis Elbow (Lateral Elbow Tendinopathy)

**This leaflet offers general information about Lateral Elbow Tendinopathy (previously known as tennis elbow) and simple management advice and exercises that may help. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a clinician.**

## What is lateral elbow tendinopathy and why have I got it?

Lateral elbow tendinopathy describes pain from the tendons on the outside of the elbow. Pain can result from repetitive work or overuse. Though any activity that involves gripping and twisting of the forearm can cause this - most cases aren't related to tennis. Golfer's elbow is a similar condition that affects the tendons on the inside of the elbow joint.

## What are the signs and symptoms?

Symptoms can vary but common ones include:

- Pain or discomfort when moving the elbow.
- Tenderness when touching the outside of your elbow and forearm.
- Repetitive movement of the wrist or repeated gripping can worsen symptoms.

## What treatments are available?

Simple self-help treatments are effective at managing symptoms. Up to 50% of lateral elbow tendinopathy resolve in three months and up to 90% in twelve months with advice, watch and wait. The first thing you can do to help is adapt movements or modify activities that may be causing your symptoms. Pacing activities, assessing work or sport ergonomics and general health and lifestyle changes can also offer long-term benefits.

## Medication

Pain relief including topical non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDS) can offer short term symptom relief. Best benefit is to take them as per their maximum recommended daily dose. Medication can have side-effects. You should read the label carefully and check with your pharmacist or doctor if you have any queries.

## Injection Therapy

Good evidence suggests corticosteroid injection (CSI) can offer short-term pain relief (4-6 weeks) but poorer long-term outcomes at twelve months compared to watch and wait. CSI is thus used rarely in clinical practice. It is only considered when other options have been fully explored without symptoms relief.

Plasma-rich Protein (PRP) injections are no better than placebo injections.

## Electrotherapy

There is no supporting evidence for laser, ultrasound or shockwave therapy.

## Orthotics

Limited evidence supports orthoses as a standalone treatment. An elbow clasp in combination with other treatment adjuncts can offer effective pain relief.

## Exercise

Exercise can help relieve pain, improve movement and support return to functional activity. Completing the following exercises every day may help to reduce your elbow pain:

1. Keeping your arm straight, palm facing down, gently bend your wrist using the opposite hand. Hold for 30 seconds. Repeat for three repetitions.



2. In a seated position with your forearm resting on a table and your palm facing down. Place your other hand on the back of your affected hand.

Gently lift your affected wrist, whilst resisting the movement. Ensure you keep your forearm in contact with the table. Hold this position for 60 seconds. Repeat five repetitions.



3. Sit upright in front of a table. Place your affected arm onto the table with your elbow bent. Hold a rolling pin or similar long object in your hand. Turn your wrist and the object over so that your palm faces upwards, then back so the palm faces downwards.

Aim to keep your elbow, shoulder and body still during the exercise. Repeat 10-15 repetitions, three times.



## Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy can provide a variety of treatments. It can help you understand your problem in more detail and assist your return to normal activities. Exercises can be progressed or regressed as symptoms require.

## What happens if I do not get treatment?

After one year, up to nine out of ten people with lateral elbow tendinopathy will see improvement of symptoms, whether they have treatment or not. Symptoms usually last for between six and 24 months.

## Things to remember

Therapists are there to support you - don't feel you have to know everything or must work through this alone.



**Be consistent** – do your exercises regularly as guided but remember to give yourself appropriate amounts of rest as well.



**Be patient** – recovering from lateral elbow tendinopathy takes time but if you do it right the first time, you'll be much better prepared for self-managing if you get a flare up in the future.



**Stay healthy** – exercising as able, sleeping and eating well, as well as being positive can all affect your pain levels and your general health.

## When to seek further help

Most soft tissue injuries resolve within 12 weeks. If you have access to the internet and / or a smartphone we recommend using the getUBetter app ([getUBetter - Request Access](#)). It provides tailored support and advice for your symptoms. Please use the QR code below to access. Alternatively, it can be accessed via your GP practice if you live in south west London. If your lateral elbow tendinopathy pain persists you can access physiotherapy via the app. If you don't have access to the internet or smartphone, please contact your GP practice for advice.



## Useful sources of information

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy

<https://www.csp.org.uk/conditions/elbow-pain>

Versus Arthritis

<https://www.versusarthritis.org/get-help/>

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your condition, please contact the MSK Physiotherapy team on 020 8812 4018 (Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm).

**For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk/service/musculoskeletal-outpatient-physiotherapy/resources-for-patients-start-your-recovery-today/](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk/service/musculoskeletal-outpatient-physiotherapy/resources-for-patients-start-your-recovery-today/)**

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## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing.

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### **NHS Choices**

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### **NHS 111**

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Tel:** 111

### **AccessAble**

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website ([www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)).

The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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