

INJURY MANAGEMENT SERIES FOR ATHLETES

Tennis Elbow and its prevention

An injury which is prevalent in many different sports and activities is Tennis Elbow. This injury is not just restricted to sports or athletic activities, but instead could even affect people from outside the field of sports or athletics.



WHAT IS TENNIS ELBOW?

Tennis Elbow, also called Lateral Epicondylitis, is an injury caused by the overuse of the wrist extensor muscles, due to which these muscles might get overstretched, or, in worse cases, develop small tears.

WHAT ARE THE ACTIVITIES THAT CAUSE TENNIS ELBOW?

Activities which cause this injury are primarily ones which require repeated twisting of the wrist, much in the same way a backhand in a game of lawn tennis is struck. In addition to improper technique in racquet sports, Tennis Elbow can also occur in the occupation of painting, driving, carpentry, jobs involving excessive typing, jobs involving cutting and chopping etc.

HOW CAN WE IDENTIFY TENNIS ELBOW?

The primary symptom of this injury is a pain on the outside of the elbow, right where the forearm joins the upper arm. The pain initially starts locally and further progresses to the upper arm. It can get difficult to conduct simple activities requiring twisting of the hand, such as opening door

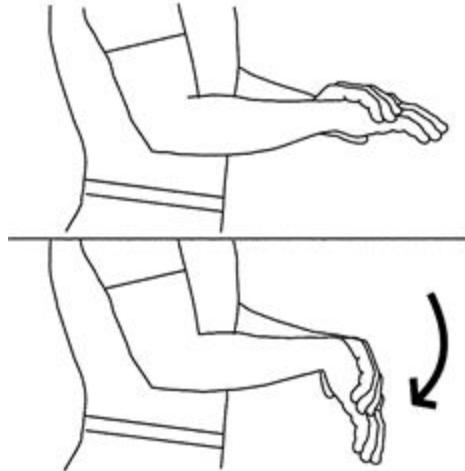
knobs, turning car keys, shaking hands and the like. Tennis Elbow is also accompanied with decreased grip strength.

HOW TO PREVENT THIS INJURY?

The prerequisite to save oneself from the onset of Tennis Elbow is to keep the wrist extensor muscles in good health and prevent overuse. At the first instance of pain, adequate rest should be given and if the pain gradually increases, medical help should be sought.

In addition to rest and medical opinion, here are a variety of exercises which can help to keep the extensor muscles in good health and prevent the onset of Tennis Elbow.

1. Wrist Extensor Stretch : Stretching the wrist extensors helps to get the muscles out of their contracted position and keep them supple and healthy. It ensures good blood flow and speeds up the process of recovery in these muscles.



Method :

1. Extend your arm in front of yourself with the palm facing inward and finger facing downward.
2. Hold the back of the extended palm with the other hand and pull further inward to feel a stretch on the top of your forearm.
3. Hold for 20 seconds on each arm and repeat 3 times.

2. Wrist Flexor Stretch: These muscles have the opposite function to the extensor muscles, that is, they help to bend the wrist forward. A combination of Extensor and Flexor stretch helps to keep the wrist joint adequately mobile and improves circulation.



Method :

1. Extend the arm outward with the palm facing out and fingers pointing upwards.
2. Hold the fingers with the other hand and pull towards the body. A stretch will be felt along the inward part of the forearm.
3. Hold for 20 seconds on each arm and repeat 3 times.
3. **Exercising with a Steel Mace:** A Steel Mace is an equipment for strength training which has been used in the Asian countries such as India as a staple to improve strength. Steel Mace training relies heavily on rotational torque which is helpful in keeping joints lubricated and mobile throughout their entire range of motion. They also help to improve endurance and grip strength.
4. **Wrist Curl and Extension:** Wrist curls and extensions done with low resistance and higher repetitions ensure development of endurance in the muscles of the forearm, which in turn improves blood circulation and overall muscle health.



Method:

1. Using a light weight dumbbell, keep the forearm on a bench, with the further half of the forearm extending out of the bench.
2. Begin with the palm facing upward. Curl the wrist towards you and take it back to neutral. Repeat for 25 repetitions on each arm.
3. Next, repeat the same process with your palm facing downward.