

WHAT IS TENNIS ELBOW?

Tennis Elbow is a term used to describe epicondylitis; that is, inflammation of the extensor muscles of the wrist that attach on the outside of the elbow. Despite its name, only 10% of Tennis Elbow cases are due to tennis. In most cases, a repetitive or unusual movement can be the underlying cause of Tennis Elbow, as well as trauma to the elbow or wrist, which can contribute to compensation and/or muscle imbalance, causing lateral elbow pain.

If the origin of the problem is purely muscular, then it should resolve within 6 to 8 weeks. If the problem persists, then there may be other contributing factors to the elbow pain, such as a neck problem, a loss of mobility of the nerves or a joint problem in the elbow. Certain factors, such as poor sitting posture at work or in the car, or improper mechanics while lifting objects or practicing sports, may also contribute to epicondylitis. Physiotherapists that are trained in manual therapy can perform a specific evaluation of the neck, shoulder, and elbow as well as an evaluation of the nerves, which may be at the source of the symptoms.

At the start of treatment, emphasis will be placed on the three joints of the elbow complex, as well as the tendons and muscles of the elbow. Ice and electrotherapy may be appropriate for more acute cases in order to decrease pain and inflammation. This will be followed by specific mobilizations of the neck, as well as techniques to improve the mobility of the nerves. A program of exercises will also be given in order to improve flexibility of the wrist, the elbow and the neck in addition to a strengthening program to establish muscle balance. An ergonomic evaluation may also be necessary. As you can see, there are a number of interventions that can help re-establish your quality of life and prevent recurrence of symptoms.