

# Osteopathic Treatment of Tennis Elbow

'Tennis Elbow' is located at the outer elbow. Tennis elbow injury is caused by an overuse of the forearm muscles leading to a tear/inflammation of the tendons attached to the elbow region. In spite of their common usage, tennis elbow is not always associated with playing tennis. In fact, it is common for sedentary desk workers to develop this injury from hours of repetitive computer / writing work. People may experience symptoms which range from pain while gripping objects, to a constant and unremitting ache that disturbs sleep. However, not all pain felt in the elbow region is necessarily due to tendon injury and people are often mis-diagnosed. Osteopathic Physicians consider a wider range of soft tissue and joint injuries in their diagnosis. What may seem like tennis elbow may only be a minor injury, easily treated with osteopathic soft tissue manipulation and joint mobilization. This removes the need for injections or surgery.

**• Relief from Tight Forearm Muscles.** The major component of tennis elbow is injury to the forearm muscles. These muscles can be injured by repetitive movements like carrying / lifting excessive loads, unaccustomed activity and by sports. Either through accumulation or excessive movement, these muscles develop trigger points or knots, which make them tight, weak and easily injured. The Osteopathic Physician can locate and determine which muscles are injured and manipulate the area to normalize the physiological state. With osteopathic treatment the muscle ache is reduced, the tightness lessened and the strength to grip, lift and carry improves. Specific advice is then given to aid further recovery and limit recurrences.

**• Resolution of 'true' Tennis Elbow.** The medical definition of this injury describes a tendon tear of the forearm muscle where it attaches to the bone.



The tear initiates an inflammatory process, which for many sufferers tends to linger, causing pain and discomfort. Left untreated this problem persists and will intermittently return. Osteopathic Physicians will be able to manage this problem using trigger point release, deep soft-tissue massage, joint manipulation and exercises. The goal of osteopathic treatment is to allow the tendon to heal, release the trigger points / knots in the muscles and mobilise the joints thus stopping the muscles from over contracting. Successful treatment will result in a return to full mobility and the ability to perform daily activities with ease and without fear that the pain will return.

that the body is connected in form and function. For many sufferers, complete recovery from elbow injuries involves resolving neck, shoulder and wrist problems. When the Osteopathic Medicine balances the tension in these areas with manipulation, any compensatory injuries to the elbow will lessen, giving it a better chance to recover completely.

**• General Advice**  
The use of elbow straps are recommended but with caution. Supports/straps are used to aid repair during the recovery phase, however, over reliance and constant use without treatment continues to damage the elbow. The use of plasters and ointments do help but ignoring persistent pain and discomfort will delay complete recovery. If in doubt, consult with an Osteopathic Physician to determine the level of damage and start recovery as soon as possible.

**• Relief from Elbow Aches**  
Most aches are muscular in origin, some can be from the ligaments and, in severe cases, a trapped nerve can produce a similar ache. Elbow injuries have a component of twisting and turning strain patterns, primarily because the elbow is designed to perform these movements. However if the movements are exaggerated it can cause injury. Although there is no severe damage to the joint or muscles, the aches can be persistent and troublesome. Osteopathic Physicians recognize these types of injuries and are able to reduce the continuing stress by balancing the ligaments, joints and membranes of the elbow. These are functional injuries which means they are mostly reversible, and with proper treatment a full recovery is achieved.

**• Relief from Stiff Forearms, Elbows and shoulder**  
Osteopathic Physicians work uniquely in that they consider how other areas such as shoulder / neck stiffness or wrist malfunction can influence elbow injuries. This is an important distinction from other forms of treatment because Osteopathic Physicians believe

*The therapist must be a Medical Doctor to remove any serious health problem, it is a MUST to eliminate any other medical reason and so, avoid any major complication or delay in the treatment. Therefore, it is especially recommended in Lebanon that the patient verifies at the LOP (Lebanese Order of Physicians) that the pretending therapist is a confirmed Medical doctor and this only for a unique purpose; their own health.*

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