



## Chicago Chiropractic & Sports Injury Centers Dr. Alden Clendenin DC, CCSP - Dr. Chris Bocci, DC, CCSP

### Hockey Elbow [aka Tennis Elbow] Causes & Treatment

Tennis Elbow is the common name given to a condition originating on the outside or lateral side of the elbow but since it is very prevalent in hockey, it might just as easily been named "Hockey Elbow". This condition arises from an irritation or inflammation of the tendons of one or several forearm muscles at their attachment to the bony protuberance close to the elbow joint, known as the lateral epicondyle. Therefore the medical term for this condition is lateral epicondylitis, meaning an inflammation of the epicondyle. If the condition is located on the inside or medial side of the elbow it is often referred as Golfer's Elbow or medial epicondylitis. This, however, is not as prevalent as lateral epicondylitis.



There are many causes for Epicondylitis - not just tennis, golf or hockey - as any activity that involves repetitive gripping of objects can result in this affliction. Some individuals develop tennis or golfer's elbow from prolonged carrying of heavy bags, knitting, chopping, and/or computer work. With sports, the problem arises from repetitive strain or increased intensity or duration of exercise. Sometimes the condition is so severe that it is difficult to even grip and lift one's coffee cup!

Hockey players are especially prone to Lateral Epicondylitis from the use of forearm tendons during "stick-handling" as well as the reverberation that transmits up the shaft of the stick into the lateral epicondyle from catching a pass on the stick, 'loading the stick' [flex] to shoot a wrist shot and especially from shooting a slap-shot.

Some cases involving epicondylitis can be attributed to problems further up the arm or even in the neck. If someone has a disc condition or spinal subluxation, the nerves that control the forearm muscles may become irritated causing the muscles to tense and put marked strain on the tendon attachment(s). In these circumstances, this predisposes an individual to elbow conditions from any of the above-mentioned causes. If left untreated it is possible that the joints of the elbow can become subluxated further complicating the condition.



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Epicondylitis is a condition that rarely resolves of its own accord and so requires proper management. A qualified professional such as a Chiropractic Sports Physician can determine the exact cause of the problem and initiate the proper care. This might include Chiropractic adjustments, trigger point therapy, Active Release Technique [ART], modalities such as ultrasound, electrotherapy, hot and cold treatments, bracing and home stretching and exercises. Combining these modalities with Chiropractic adjustments have proven very effective in the overall management of this problem.

Without a doubt, the most important part of treating your lateral epicondylitis /hockey/tennis elbow is the manipulations performed by your chiropractic doctor. Manipulations (adjustments) improve your spine's, and in this case extremity alignment and motion, and relieve pain. During an adjustment your chiropractic doctor will place his/her hands on your spine or extremity to manipulate specific joints gently and precisely. Adjustments can be done anywhere on the spine or extremity joints as often as needed. After the manipulation you may feel immediate improvement, although most people experience gradual, progressive relief of their symptoms.

In addition to Chiropractic manipulation, ultrasound used in conjunction with electrotherapy is a very effective method of treatment used at our clinics. The ultrasound treatment uses high-frequency sound waves to penetrate the tissues deep within the injury site. These vibrations (as fast as 1,000,000 times per second) within the tissue help break down and disperse unhealthy calcium, scar tissue and other tissue fibrosis. Ultra-sound is effective because it is applied directly to the area of complaint, penetrating deep into the body. The rise in temperature in the tissue caused by the ultrasound, combined with the electrotherapy induced vasodilation (increasing diameter of blood vessels), increases blood flow to the tissue. The rise in temperature and vasodilation relax muscle spasms, massage damaged tissues, and speeds the healing process without irritation. Ultrasound combined with electrotherapy is a painless method of treatment. The treatment involves sticky electrode pads placed near the elbow and slight comfortable electrical pulses are sent to the region. Gel is applied to the skin to better conduct the sound waves. Then the ultrasound probe is applied to the site and moved in a circular motion. Most patients experience a warm, tingling relaxing feeling during the actual treatment.

To find out more about how our clinics can help you with this, or any other sports injury/ health problem, please call either of our two convenient locations.

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