

# Golfer's Elbow (Medial Epicondylitis)

## Patient Information Leaflet

MSK Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Service



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## What is golfer's elbow?

Golfer's elbow is also known as medial epicondylitis. It is a common condition that causes pain on the inside of your elbow. It happens when the tendon that joins your forearm muscles to your elbow becomes sore from overuse.

These muscles help you grip, lift, twist and bend the wrist. Because of this, these movements can be painful. Most people with golfer's elbow do not play golf.

Golfer's elbow can be uncomfortable, but it is not usually caused by serious damage. Most people get better with the right advice and exercises.

Common symptoms:

- pain on the inside of the elbow
- pain when gripping or squeezing objects
- pain when lifting or carrying items
- pain with twisting movements (for example, opening jars, turning keys or using a screwdriver)
- tenderness when pressing the inside of the elbow
- sometimes, pain or stiffness into the forearm

## Why does it happen?

Golfer's elbow usually develops slowly over time, rather than from a specific injury.

It often occurs when the muscles in the forearm have been exposed to a change in load. 'Load' refers to the force we place on the muscles and tendons.

A muscle and tendons' ability to cope with this load is called its 'capacity'. If the load is bigger than the capacity, this can cause pain. This process is often gradual and develops slowly over time but can occur more quickly in response to a specific activity.

Common contributing factors include:

- a sudden increase in activity (e.g. sport or DIY)
- repetitive gripping, lifting or manual work
- playing lots of racquet sports or golf
- prolonged use of tools or computer equipment
- reduced strength of the muscles in your forearm

## Self-help

Management focuses on calming the pain and slowly building strength so you can return to normal activities.

Helpful strategies include:

### **Activity modification**

Try to reduce or change movements that make the pain worse. This is usually only needed for a short time.

### **Keeping the elbow moving**

Avoid complete rest. Gentle movement helps the elbow stay flexible.

### **Graded strengthening exercises**

Exercises that slowly build strength in your forearm are the best way to improve your symptoms. Start gently and increase gradually.

### **Pain management**

Heat (i.e. hot water bottles) or ice (i.e. frozen peas wrapped in a tea towel) can help reduce pain. If needed, speak to a pharmacist or GP about pain relief.

## Exercises

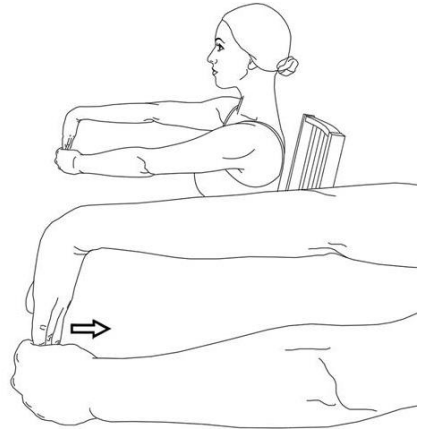
The following exercises are a good starting point.

You may feel a stretch or mild discomfort, but this should settle after you stop.

### Wrist Extension Stretch

Hold your arm and hand in front of you, with your fingers pointing upwards.

Pull your hand backwards, to create a stretch on the underside of your wrist and forearm and hold.



**Hold 10 secs | Repeat 3 times | Perform 2 to 3 times daily**

Access a video of this exercise below (digital leaflet only):

[Rehab My Patient: Wrist Extension Stretch](#)

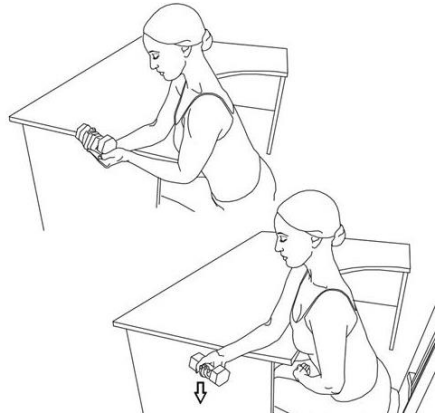
## Eccentric Wrist Strengthening

Rest your arm on a table with your palm facing up. Hold a dumb bell / weight / bottle / can.

Lift your hand upwards using your other hand.

With a controlled movement, slowly lower your hand back down.

At the bottom, repeat by lifting your own hand upwards again, and letting the weight pull your hand back down.



**Repeat** 10 times | **Perform** 2 to 3 times daily

Access a video of this exercise below (digital leaflet only):

[Rehab My Patient: Eccentric Wrist Extension Strengthening](#)

## How long does it take to improve?

Golfer's elbow takes time to settle.

Most people notice improvement after 8-12 weeks of doing the right exercises and making small activity changes.

Some cases take longer, especially if the pain has been

there for many months. Sticking with your exercises and returning to activity slowly gives the best results.

## When should I seek further help?

Speak to a GP or Physiotherapist if:

- pain becomes severe or significantly worsens
- pain is worsening despite changing your activity levels
- your symptoms are showing no signs of improvement
- you develop numbness, weakness or symptoms spreading down the arm

## Remember

Golfer's elbow is a very common cause of elbow pain.

It is usually caused by overuse, not by significant damage.

Strengthening exercises are the most effective treatment.

Most people improve with time, exercise and small activity changes.

## Acknowledgements



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If you need help to understand this leaflet or would like it in a different language or format such as large print, Braille or audio, please ask a member of staff.



## MSK Physiotherapy Service

Find out more about the MSK Physiotherapy Service and what we offer

[www.leicspart.nhs.uk/service/musculoskeletal-msk-therapy-physiotherapy/](http://www.leicspart.nhs.uk/service/musculoskeletal-msk-therapy-physiotherapy/)



## Further Resources

Access our other MSK Physiotherapy resources [www.leicspart.nhs.uk/msk-physiotherapy-resources-getting-started/](http://www.leicspart.nhs.uk/msk-physiotherapy-resources-getting-started/)

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