

Put Your Tennis Elbow on Ice



If you're a tennis player with a hard, single-handed backhand shot, you can end up with a painful condition known as tennis elbow. Pain originates in the outer portion of the elbow and works its way down the forearm. Tennis players who are new to the game or use their forearms instead of the force of their whole bodies to swing the racket are most vulnerable.

Other factors that contribute to the problem include:

- Using a racket that's too heavy.
- Using a racket that's too tightly strung.
- Using played out, deflated tennis balls or ones that are wet and heavy.
- Using an improper grip.
- Trying to put spin on the ball with improper wrist action.
- Using poor backhand technique.

Continuing to use the arm aggravates the situation. Even several weeks of rest won't prevent repeat episodes. The best game plan is to rest, then strengthen your forearm muscles and get coaching to improve your skill level.

To relieve tennis elbow pain:

- Apply ice for the first two or three days.
- Take an over-the-counter medicine to reduce pain and inflammation. Examples are aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen sodium. Take as directed.

If you still have pain after three weeks, see a doctor for proper diagnosis and treatment.

To prevent repeat bouts of tennis elbow:

- Wait until the pain is gone and your grip strength is normal before resuming play.
- Wear an elastic bandage or counter-force brace around the forearm, as directed.
- To strengthen your forearm muscles, lift small 1- to 2-pound weights by alternately flexing and extending your wrists with the palms facing down and your forearms resting on a flat surface. Start with 10 repetitions and work up to 40, three or four times a week.