Any clue about what Lateral Epicondylitis is? O.K. how about Tennis Elbow? There, I thought tennis elbow would go down better.

It is present when you have pain on the outside part of the elbow. For many of us it is not just pain, but a sharp stabbing that does not go away. I can tell you that most of my patients who have the condition do not play tennis or any racquet sport.

It is usually referred to as an overuse injury meaning that people tend to get it if they have jobs that require repetitive motion using the hand, wrist or arm.

**Location**

Tendons connect muscles to bone. At the elbow tendons attach the forearm muscles to a bony prominence on the outer side of the elbow that is termed the lateral epicondyle. Movements that require gripping, turning and twisting of the hand, wrist or forearm can overwork these tendons causing inflammation.

At the site of the tendon attachment to the bone there are often some pre-existing small tears in the tendons. These are wear and tear changes that build up over time that you were not aware of.

**Treatment**

When pain sets in at the site I mentioned, treatment should not be delayed. Catch it in the bud in other words.

- If you know what repetitive action may have caused it, stop for a week or two if you can.
- Ice for 15 – 20 minutes twice a day.
- Motrin (Ibuprofen) or Aleve (Naproxen).
- Try Theragesic or similar to painful area 3 times a day.

If no better in 2 weeks it would be wise to seek medical attention.

- We often prescribe a type of elastic – velcro strap that is pulled tight just below the elbow.
- Sometimes we advise a long wrist forearm brace to immobilize the tendons.

**Advanced Treatment**

By this time a plain x-ray of the elbow should have been done. It can detect bone spurs or arthritis changes that can mimic the tissue inflammation of tennis elbow.

Once in a while (but not routine) and MRI study might be needed to confirm the diagnosis.

MRI can show

- partial tendon tearing at the elbow
- chronic thickening of the tendons
- degenerative joint change not seen on plain x-ray films.

In resistant cases treatment at a physical therapy facility is often prescribed. Injection of the corticosteroid into the inflamed area can give significant relief.
Arthroscopic surgery for lateral epicondylitis is available at larger centers which have Orthopaedic Surgeons on their staff who are specialist in the upper extremity.

There are a number of unusual treatment options that are available but not covered by most insurance plans.

- Injection of a collagen product harvested from placental tissue.
- Injection of platelet rich plasma that is derived from a sample of a patient’s own blood.
- Laser treatment that is available at Pain Free Life Centers in the Detroit area.

Well we have thoroughly covered the spectrum of treatment of Tennis Elbow. See how complicated things can seem when you begin to scratch the surface!

Hope your week goes well. I’ll be back with you in another 7 days. Orthopaedic Connection has recently gone over 500 articles that have appeared every week in this newspaper. Ciao.

My patients put their trust in me and what I do improves the quality of their lives.

Office Website and Gratiot County Herald Archive

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Please check it out. Do yourself a favor.

Be well.

315 Warwick Drive
Alma, Michigan 48801
Phone 989-463-6092 for an appointment

Dr. Haverbush