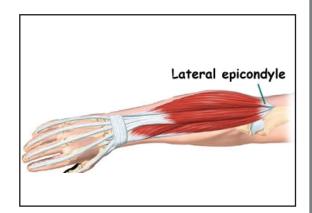
Lateral epicondylitis

What is lateral epicondylitis?

Lateral epicondylitis is caused by repetitive stresses on the outside of the elbow that causes inflammation (swelling) and microfractures (small breaks) in the apophyseal cartilage (growth plate on the bone) and the surrounding structures.

Who is at risk?

- Children/adolescents who participate in sports that require repetitive throwing or weight bearing with their arm(s), including baseball, softball, gymnastics, golf, etc.
- Most common in children/adolescents 10-13 years old.



What are the symptoms?

- Point tenderness on the outside of the elbow.
- Pain with resisted wrist extension (lifts palm away from forearm) and/or supination (turning palm up).
- Pain on the outside of the elbow when stresses are placed at this area.
- Swelling on the outside of the elbow.

What are the treatment options?

Conservative/non-surgical treatment:

- Rest from aggravating activities or relative rest.
- Ice the area for swelling/pain for 10 to 20 minutes, once an hour as needed.
- Muscle stretching to improve flexibility.
- Stretching should be done above and below elbow joint, before and after activity.
- Elbow tendon strap for compression may help.
- If the condition does not improve, a referral to physical therapy to address pain, swelling, range of motion, flexibility, strength, bracing/taping and sport training will usually improve symptoms.
- This is a self-limiting condition that usually resolves with time, muscle stretching and patience. It may require 10-24 months of a conservative treatment protocol for the symptoms to completely resolve. Once the growth plate stops growing and fuses to the underlying bone, the symptoms typically resolve.

Surgical treatment:

• Internally fixation with a screw may help adolescents with recurrent symptoms.

What is the time frame for return to activity/sport?

- Usually six to 12 weeks, but athlete will need to have a normal exam.
- Functional, painless range-of-motion must be present.

What are the long-term side effects of having lateral epicondylitis?

- Loss of range of motion, possibly contracture (inability to straighten arm).
- Decreased strength in arm/hand.



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