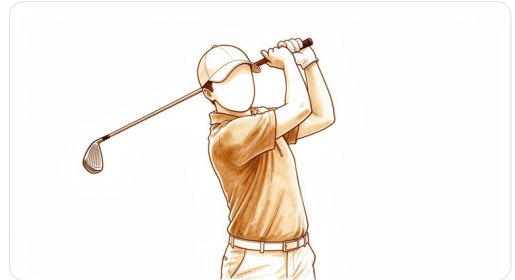


Golfer's Elbow

Golfer's elbow: the tendons that flex your wrist and fingers attach to a bony bump on the inside of your elbow, and overuse causes pain and degeneration where they meet the bone.

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What you're feeling

You are likely experiencing pain and stiffness on the inner side of your elbow. This area is known as the medial humeral epicondyle. The discomfort often stems from issues with the common flexor origin, which is where your forearm muscles attach to the bone. You might notice that this pain limits your daily activities and makes simple movements feel difficult.

The pain often flares up after you have been using your arm. Tasks that involve gripping or lifting can trigger a sharp ache. You may find it hard to perform everyday actions, such as reaching behind your back to fasten a bra or tucking in a shirt. Even sleeping on the affected side can become uncomfortable, disrupting your rest. Your surgeon will assess these symptoms to confirm the diagnosis and rule out other issues, as isolated elbow injuries are rare and fractures often signal soft tissue damage.

While the pain can be persistent, there are effective ways to manage it. Treatment options, such as percutaneous common flexor origin release, have been shown to provide significant and sustainable improvements in pain and function. These benefits are typically maintained during a 1-year follow-up period. By addressing the source of the pain at the attachment site, your surgeon aims to restore your ability to use your arm without discomfort. This approach helps you return to your normal routine with greater ease and confidence.

What's actually happening

Golfer's elbow is a wear-and-tear injury to the tendons on the inner side of your elbow. These tendons connect your forearm muscles to the bony bump on the inside of your elbow, known as the medial epicondyle. Think of these tendons as thick ropes that help you grip objects and bend your wrist.

When you repeatedly lift heavy objects or perform repetitive gripping motions, these ropes take on a heavy load. Over time, this stress causes tiny tears in the tendon fibers. The body tries to repair these tears, but the constant strain prevents full healing. This leads to inflammation and pain at the common flexor origin, which is the specific spot where these tendons attach to the bone.

The pain you feel is a direct result of this damaged tissue. When you try to lift something or rotate your forearm, the injured tendons stretch against the bone. This triggers sharp pain or a dull ache on the inner elbow. The area may also feel tender to the touch.

In some cases, the damage becomes chronic. The tendon structure weakens, and the pain persists even when you are resting. This is why simple rest often does not provide lasting relief. The tissue needs time to heal, but daily activities often re-injure it before it can recover.

Your surgeon may recommend a procedure called a percutaneous common flexor origin release. This treatment involves carefully releasing the tight, damaged part of the tendon. It is a safe and effective option that provides significant and sustainable improvements in pain and function during a 1-year follow-up period. By relieving the tension on the injured area, this procedure helps the tendon heal properly and restores your ability to use your arm without pain.

What we can do about it

Most cases of golfer's elbow improve with time and care. Conservative management is the gold standard for simple injuries. You can start by resting the arm and avoiding the movements that cause pain. Physiotherapy helps strengthen the muscles around your elbow to support the healing tendon. This approach works for many people, including those with mild instability from throwing. Your surgeon may use an Elbow UCL Injury Prognosis Score to predict if you will succeed with nonoperative management. This helps avoid unnecessary surgery.

If rest and therapy are not enough, your surgeon may discuss medical options. These include pain medication and anti-inflammatory drugs to reduce swelling and discomfort. Injections are another option. Cortisone injections can provide short-term relief by reducing inflammation. Hyaluronic acid or platelet-rich plasma (PRP) injections may help stimulate healing, though their long-term effects vary. For tennis elbow, which shares similar symptoms, most cases resolve by 6 months regardless of the treatment used. For golfer's elbow, percutaneous common flexor origin release provides significant and sustainable improvements in pain and function during a 1-year follow-up period. Your surgeon will help you decide if an injection is right for you based on your specific symptoms.

Surgery is considered only when conservative care has reached its limit. It is indicated if your elbow remains unstable or if you cannot move it past 50 to 60 degrees without it slipping out of place. Surgery is also needed for unstable fractures or dislocations that cannot be held in place with a cast. The goal of surgery is to repair the torn tissues so you can move your elbow safely and regain strength. In experienced hands, procedures like elbow arthroscopy are safe and effective. If you do not respond to nonoperative approaches, surgery for tennis elbow provides near 90% satisfaction rates. Your surgeon will discuss the specific risks and benefits of any procedure with you.

What to expect

Golfer's elbow is a condition where the tendons on the inside of your elbow become irritated. For many people, this pain and stiffness can be persistent. However, treatment offers a clear path forward. If you choose surgical release of the common flexor origin, you can expect significant and sustainable improvements in both pain and function. These benefits are not just short-lived; they last through a full 1-year follow-up period. This procedure is considered a safe and effective option for those who have not found relief with other methods.

Recovery is a gradual process that requires patience. If you undergo surgery for complex elbow instability or stiffness, your rehabilitation programme must start promptly. You will need to continue this therapy for at least 6 months. This period is critical. Most of the significant improvement in your range of motion occurs during these first six months. After this time, your elbow is likely to have reached a functional level that allows you to perform daily tasks with less discomfort.

For those with severe joint damage requiring replacement, outcomes vary by implant type. Some specific elbow replacements, such as the Latitude primary total elbow arthroplasty, have lower survival rates and higher complication rates compared to other options. In contrast, other devices like the GSBIII elbow replacement provide good long-term function with a low revision rate and few complications. If you have post-traumatic arthritis, hemiarthroplasty (a partial joint replacement) can result in 57% of patients with surviving implants achieving good to excellent scores. These patients also see predictable improvements in how far they can bend and straighten their elbow.

If left alone, symptoms may persist. While some minor cases might settle, chronic golfer's elbow often interferes with daily life. Surgery provides a reliable way to break this cycle. Whether you have a simple release or a more complex reconstruction, the goal is to restore stability and motion. With proper care and rehabilitation, you can return to a functional standard that supports your lifestyle. Your surgeon will help you navigate these options to find the best fit for your specific injury.

When to see someone

See your GP if you have persistent pain at the inner elbow that does not improve with rest. Ask for a specialist review if you notice weakness or instability in the joint. Seek care if your elbow locks or gives way during movement. Contact your surgeon if symptoms interfere with your sleep or work duties. Sudden worsening of pain also warrants prompt evaluation. Golfer's elbow causes pain and functional impairment at the medial humeral epicondyle, which is the bony bump on the inside of your elbow. Early assessment helps ensure accurate diagnosis and proper treatment. Do not ignore these signs, as timely intervention can prevent further complications.