

Elbow Pain

Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.

Introduction

Elbow pain is common. Although it can be very uncomfortable it is rarely due to a serious cause. For most people the pain will normally resolve within six to 12 weeks without any treatment.

Common causes

A number of factors have been associated with elbow pain. These include:

- Sprain, strain or a fall
- A sudden increase or decrease in your normal activity or exercise levels
- Muscle weakness
- Nerve irritation – pain travelling from the neck into the arm and sometimes affecting the hand
- Following a period of increased stress, worry or low mood
- Following a period of poor sleep, fatigue or feeling run down
- Other lifestyle factors such as being overweight and smoking
- A flare up of longstanding elbow pain
- Other conditions

Common symptoms

These include:

- Pain around the outer side of the elbow is called 'Tennis elbow'
- Pain around the inner side of the elbow is called 'Golfer's elbow'
- Pain on gripping
- Swelling
- Stiffness
- Tingling or numbness in/or around the elbow or hand

You may experience constant or intermittent (comes and goes) symptoms that are aggravated by certain activities and reduced by others.

What can I do to help it?

- In the first few days after an onset of elbow pain, changing or reducing your usual activities may help. However, there is strong evidence that keeping active and gradually returning to all your usual activities and exercise will help you recover
- It is normal to experience some pain during your recovery, but it does not mean you are damaging your elbow
- Try to stay at work or return as soon as you are able. Your employer, GP or health practitioner will be able to advise on how to return to your normal work duties

Try some of these self-help tips to aid your recovery:

- Apply a heat or icepack to the painful area – for up to 15 minutes. **Never apply heat or ice directly to the skin**
- A short course of simple pain medication as advised by your pharmacist or GP may help reduce pain and allow you to move more comfortably
- Keep moving. Regular movement and exercise is safe and helpful for elbow pain. It is important to build up gradually – the exercise or activity you enjoy most, is likely to help your recovery
- Good sleep habits and managing stress may help you cope better with your pain.

Facts about elbow pain

- Elbow pain is common WITHOUT any damage to the joint
- X-rays and scans often DO NOT show the cause of your pain
- Creaking or clicking elbow joints are common in people without elbow pain. It is a RARELY a sign of harm or damage
- Movement and exercise is NOT harmful for elbow joint
- Your elbow can become stronger and healthier with regular movement and exercise
- Improving your sleep and general health is all also important for your elbow pain

When should I seek medical advice?

Call your GP surgery if

- Your pain is getting worse.
- You have tried the self-help tips for three to four weeks and the symptoms have not improved

Seek immediate medical advice if

- After a fall or injury
 - Your elbow is misshapen and swollen
 - You are unable to move your elbow or arm
- You have a sudden loss of power and/or feeling in one or both arms and/or hands
- You have a fever and your elbow is hot, red, swollen and painful

Do I need an X-ray or scan?

- X-rays or scans are NOT usually required to diagnose elbow pain
- X-rays or scans are NOT able to tell us how much pain you are experiencing
- X-rays and scans often show joint narrowing and osteoarthritis which are common in people WITHOUT elbow pain. These findings are unlikely to change the way you manage your pain
- X-rays and scans are best used where a serious injury (for example, a broken bone) or conditions such as cancer or infection are suspected

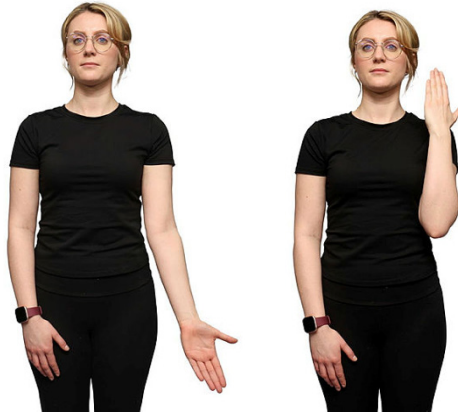
Why exercise?

It is important to get the elbow moving early in order to gain mobility, strength and return to normal function. Early exercise can have a positive influence on tissue healing and reduce the potential for joint and soft tissue stiffness.

Elbow exercises

These are suggested exercises and are to be performed within comfortable limits. If you have any concerns about any of the exercises, please seek medical advice.

1. Stand with your arm by your side and palm facing forward. Bend the elbow and aim for the hand to touch the shoulder. You can assist this movement by supporting the forearm with the opposite hand. Repeat 10 times three times per day.



2. Rest the forearm on a table, palm down. Keeping the shoulder and body still, turn the hand over aiming for the back of the hand to rest on the table. Repeat 10 times three times per day.



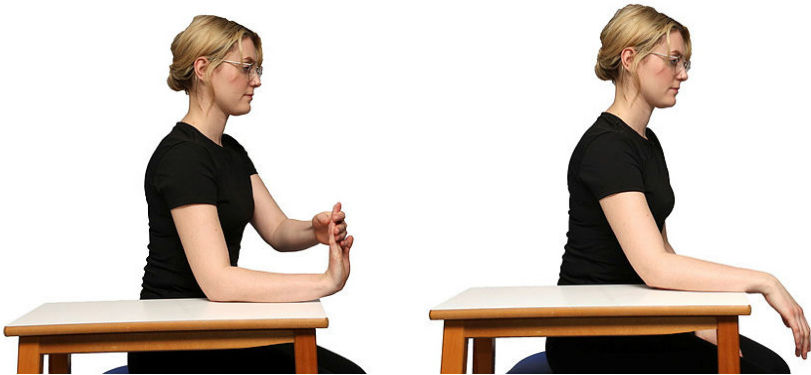
3. Rest the forearm on a table with the wrist and hand over the edge of the table, palm facing down. Keeping the elbow straight, lift the hand bending at the wrist. Use the opposite hand to add some gentle overpressure and hold this position for 20 seconds. Repeat three times per day.



4. Rest the forearm on a table with the wrist and hand over the edge of the table, palm facing up. Bend the wrist up, fingers towards the ceiling. Add some gentle overpressure at the end of the movement and hold it for 20 seconds. Repeat three times per day.



5. Rest the forearm on a table with the wrist and hand over the edge of the table, palm facing down. Use the other hand to passively lift the hand up, bending at the wrist. Remove the hand at the end of the movement and allow the wrist and hand to slowly lower back to the starting position. Repeat three sets of 10 repetitions three times per day.



Gradually

- Return to your normal activities
- Resume hobbies and sports

If you are unsure of when to progress your exercises, or you have any concerns about your injury please use the PHIO self-referral platform or scan the QR code below.



Do I need a fit note?

- If you're off work sick for seven days or less, your employer will normally ask you to complete a self-certificate for sick leave as soon as you return to work
- If you're off work sick for more than seven days your employer will normally ask for a fit note (or Statement of Fitness for Work) from your GP or hospital doctor
- You can read more information here <https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/caring-carers-and-long-term-conditions/when-do-i-need-a-fit-note/>

Useful websites and resources

What should you know about joint health? <https://bodylogic.physio/what-should-you-know-about-joint-health/>

Accessing information and support to make healthy lifestyle choices

Online support:

Exercise

- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/?tabname=exercise-tips>
- <https://www.nhs.uk>conditions>nhs-fitness-studio>

Sleep

- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/10-tips-to-beat-insomnia/>

Diet

- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/start-the-nhs-weight-loss-plan>

Emotional well being

1. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/>

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。