

Elbow Pain

What are common conditions and treatments of Elbow Pain?

Elbow pain is an extremely common complaint, and there are many common causes of this problem. It is important to make an accurate diagnosis of the cause of your symptoms so that appropriate treatment can be directed at the cause. If you have elbow pain, some common causes include:

Lateral Epicondylitis

The most common cause of elbow pain is lateral epicondylitis, also called tennis elbow. Injured workers with lateral epicondylitis have pain over the outside of the joint and difficulty gripping objects. Interestingly, most injured workers with lateral epicondylitis are not tennis players.

Medial Epicondylitis

Similar to lateral epicondylitis, medial epicondylitis, or golfer's elbow, causes discomfort around the joint. However, the symptoms of medial epicondylitis are on the inner side of the joint. Again, most injured workers with this condition are not golfers.

Olecranon Bursitis

Bursitis is most common behind the elbow joint. When a patient has olecranon bursitis, they usually have swelling and tenderness behind the joint over the bony prominence called the olecranon. Infections of the bursa can complicate the treatment of olecranon bursitis.

Tendonitis

Tendonitis can occur in any of the tendons that surround the joint. The most common types of tendonitis that cause elbow pain are biceps tendonitis (in front of the joint) and triceps tendonitis (in the back of the joint).

Cubital Tunnel Syndrome

Cubital tunnel syndrome occurs when there is compression of the ulnar nerve as it wraps around the inside of the joint causing elbow pain. Cubital tunnel syndrome can also cause shooting pains along the forearm and numbness and tingling of the fingers.

Radial Tunnel Syndrome

Radial tunnel syndrome is an uncommon condition that causes nerve compression of the radial nerve. Most often, this diagnosis is considered in injured workers who are thought to have lateral epicondylitis, but do not improve.

Elbow Fractures

Broken bones can occur around the elbow after injuries such as falls, sports injuries, and car accidents. The most common elbow fractures are olecranon fractures and radial head

fractures.

When do you need to call your doctor about your elbow pain?

If you are unsure of the cause of your elbow pain, or if you do not know the specific treatment recommendations for your condition, you should seek medical attention. Treatment of these conditions must be directed at the specific cause of your problem. Some signs that you should be seen by a doctor include:

- Inability to carry objects or use the arm
- Injury that causes deformity of the joint
- Elbow pain that occurs at night or while resting
- Elbow pain that persists beyond a few days
- Inability to straighten or flex the arm
- Swelling or significant bruising around the joint or arm
- Signs of an infection, including fever, redness, warmth
- Any other unusual symptoms

What are the common treatments for elbow pain?

Treatment depends entirely on the cause of the problem. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that you understand the cause of your symptoms before embarking on a treatment program and should seek medical advice before beginning any treatment plan.

Some common treatments for elbow pain are listed here. Not all of these treatments are appropriate for every condition, but they may be applied in your situation.

Rest

The first treatment for many common conditions that cause elbow pain is to rest the joint, and allow the acute inflammation to subside. It is important, however, to use caution when resting the joint, because prolonged immobilization can cause a stiff joint.

Ice and Heat Application

Ice packs and heat pads are among the most commonly used treatments for elbow pain. So which one is the right one to use, ice or heat? And how long should the ice or heat treatments last?

Stretching

Stretching the muscles and tendons that surround the joint can help with some causes of elbow pain. A good routine should be established, and following some specific suggestions

will help you on your way.

Physical therapy

Physical therapy is an important aspect of treatment of almost all orthopedic conditions. Physiotherapists use different modalities to increase strength, regain mobility, and help return injured workers to their pre-injury level of activity.

Anti-Inflammatory Medication

No steroidal anti-inflammatory pain medications, commonly referred to as NSAIDs, are some of the most commonly prescribed medications, especially for injured workers with elbow pain caused by problems such as arthritis, bursitis, and tendonitis.

Cortisone injections

Cortisone is a powerful medication that treats inflammation, and inflammation is a common problem in injured workers with elbow pain. Discuss with your doctor the possible benefits of a cortisone injection for your elbow pain condition.

Vocational Rehabilitation

This should begin as soon as possible after the injury. The Rehabilitation Provider will assist to identify suitable duties with the employer and in consultation with the treating medical provider, the injured worker, their supervisor and any other key person. The Rehabilitation Provider will prepare a return to work plan of action with the aim being a gradual and safe return to normal work duties. This plan will always include considerations directed by the Medical Provider and may include identifying any other requirements or services needed.