

Giving the Back Hand to Tennis Elbow CHIROPRACTIC MANAGEMENT OF LATERAL EPICONDYLITIS

Considered a cumulative trauma injury, those at increased risk of “tennis elbow” include manual laborers, those who participate in racket sports, those who do a lot of typing and computer work, gardeners, and those who use their hands for fine tasks such as needlepoint.

Overview: Lateral epicondylitis (LE), commonly referred to as “tennis elbow,” is defined as degenerative damage to the tendon that connects muscles in the forearm to the outer elbow. LE is a common cause of elbow pain but it does affect more than tennis players! Considered a cumulative trauma injury, those at increased risk include manual laborers, those who participate in racket sports, those who do a lot of typing and computer work, gardeners, and those who use their hands for fine tasks such as needlepoint.

Symptoms:

- Pain in the outer elbow
- Difficulty lifting
- Difficulty grasping
- Pain radiating down the arm

Conditions with Similar Symptoms:

- Radial tunnel syndrome
- Medial epicondylitis
- Elbow osteochondritis dissecans
- “Little League Elbow”
- Arthritis

YOUR TREATMENT

Because there are a number of conditions that can cause symptoms that mimic lateral epicondylitis and because there are a number of possible reasons you may be experiencing pain, a variety of treatment options may be considered. The decision on which treatment should be used will be based on your preferences, examination findings, experience treating patients with similar conditions and the best available scientific evidence.

- **MOBILIZATION AND MANIPULATION/ADJUSTMENT** of the joint may be used in the treatment of lateral epicondylitis. Mobilization involves putting the joints and soft tissues of the elbow through normal range of motion in controlled stretches. Manipulation, also called adjustment, may relieve the pressure and improve function of the joints involved. Your doctor will determine what will work best for you.
- **EXERCISES AND STRETCHES** that may benefit lateral epicondylitis are those that exercise the arm, elbow, hand, and wrist. These exercises and stretches may help by strengthening the muscles of the wrists, hands, neck, and shoulders. Increased blood flow may also be beneficial. Loosening and stretching the ligaments may also ease pressure in the elbow. The exercises you are to perform will be discussed with you by your doctor following an examination and orthopedic testing to determine your specific needs.



In an effort to determine whether office ergonomics intervention and/or training in ergonomics really impacts musculoskeletal (muscle and bone) health, researchers provided office employees with either a “highly adjustable” chair AND ergonomic training, training only, or nothing. The researchers questioned the employees about daily symptoms 2 months and 1 month before the “intervention” and then again 2, 6, and 12 months after; at these times, employees were questioned at the beginning, middle and end of their workdays. The researchers found what many have suspected: providing workers with adjustable chairs and training them in proper postures and equipment use can reduce symptoms and pain. Specifically, after comparing results from all three groups, the scientists concluded that “workers who received a highly adjustable chair and office ergonomics training had reduced symptom growth over the workday.” (Amick III BC, et al. *Spine*. December 15, 2003; Vol. 28, No. 24, pp. 2706-2711.)

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continued from page 1

- **ACUPUNCTURE** involves the insertion of very fine needles into the skin at points determined based on the condition being treated. Acupuncture has been used for centuries and the theory behind it is that the needles can correct and improve the body's flow of energy (called Chi). In addition to the needles, forms of acupuncture can incorporate pressure, electric currents, laser, or heat.
- **SUPPORT BRACES** for tennis elbow may include braces and splints. They are sometimes recommended for the treatment of lateral epicondylitis to rest the muscles and tendons. A correct fit and the type of orthotic you are to use is important and will be discussed with you if appropriate for your care.

- **LASER TREATMENTS** may help some manage lateral epicondylitis symptoms. Laser is applied to elbow or other necessary areas determined by examination. Laser is intended to activate endorphins, which naturally reduce pain. The treatment is painless and may require multiple sessions.
- **ULTRASOUND** is thought to decrease inflammation and therefore may relieve symptoms of lateral epicondylitis. Ultrasound therapy is applied to the elbow over the injured tendon. Several treatments may be necessary.

YOUR ALTERNATIVES

Your condition may be best treated using both chiropractic treatments and other treatments from additional healthcare professionals. If your condition requires it, a direct referral for treatment may be made

to medical, surgical or other healthcare providers.

- **NSAIDS** – either topical (applied to the skin) or oral (taken by mouth) non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, whether over the counter or prescription, may relieve pain such that normal activities can be continued. When taking pain relievers, keep in mind that lack of pain may make you forget that you have an injury.



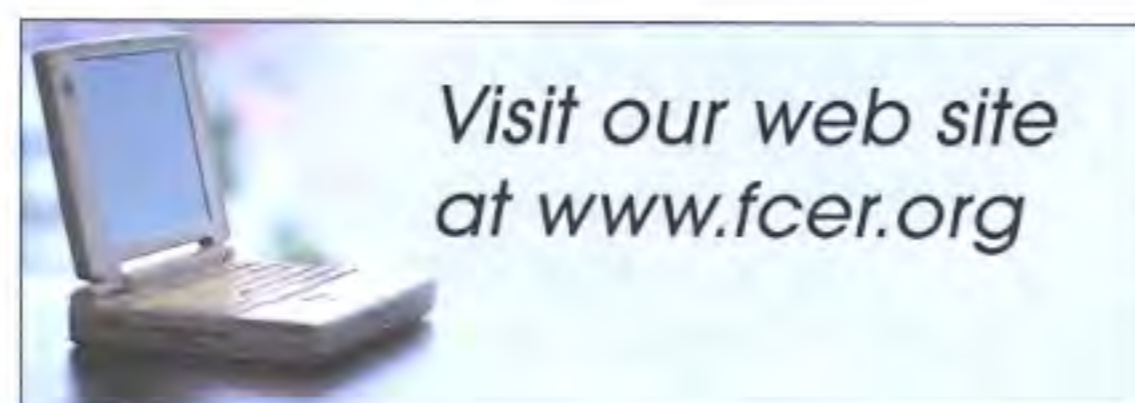
continued on page 3

You will need to be vigilant to avoid reinjuring or exacerbating the condition.

- **CORTICOSTEROID INJECTIONS** may relieve pain for those patients who have not found relief with more conservative treatments.
- **EXTRACORPOREAL SHOCK WAVE THERAPY (ESWT)** is very focused ultrasound that sends shocks to the injured tendon and joint. There are two types of ESWT—low energy shock wave and high energy shock wave. Low energy ESWT is painless or nearly painless and is conducted over several treatment sessions. High energy ESWT is extremely painful and is therefore generally provided in one session while the patient is under some form of anesthesia. (www.orthopedics.about.com.)
- **SURGERY** for lateral epicondylitis most commonly involves either repair of the tendon, removal of part of the tendon, or the release of the tendon from the elbow. According to orthopedics.about.com, surgery for lateral epicondylitis should only be considered by those patients who have tried more conservative methods for at least 6 to 12 months and who have consistently and diligently performed exercises, stretches, and other recommended treatments.

Prevention:

- Exercise and maintain strength and flexibility in the arms
- Avoid repetitive motions and repetitive stress
- Rest when injured and allow plenty of time for healing before resuming activity
- Make sure you use the proper technique and the right sized equipment for sporting activities
- Warm up and cool down when exercising



News & Views

Another Benefit of Exercise for Children

When researchers studied healthy but sedentary children aged 7 to 11 years, they found that adding exercise to their routines reduced their weights and their anger. The findings applied regardless of race, gender and socioeconomic status. "Exercise had a significant impact on anger expression in children," said Catherine Davis, researcher and psychologist at the Medical College of Georgia School of Medicine. "This finding indicates that aerobic exercise may be an effective strategy to help overweight kids reduce anger expression and aggressive behavior." The study was published in the November 2008 issue of *Pediatric Exercise Science*. Many believe that these findings also apply to adults as previous research has found positive links between exercise and mood and anxiety. (*HealthDay*. December 3, 2008.)

Is Your Home Really Child Safe?

"Despite advances in recent years and the decrease in unintentional fatal poisonings, unintentional child poisonings remain an important public health concern," said U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) investigators Robert L. Franklin and Dr. Gregory B. Rodgers. Though improvements in product packaging has lowered the occurrence of child poisonings, the USPC found that in 2004, there were over 86,000 accidental poisonings in children under 5 years old. According to the study, 55% of child poisonings involved products that had "child-resistant packaging" – most often oral medications; the most common cause of poisoning in the remaining 45% of cases involved cleaning products. Parents and caregivers need to recognize that child-resistant does not mean child-proof and all potentially toxic products – whether prescribed or over-the-counter medications, cleaning products, lighter fluid, or anti-freeze – must be kept out of the reach of children. (*Reuters*. December 1, 2008.)

Prone to hypertension? Better Sleep More

According to a new study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, those who are prone to high blood pressure may increase their risk of heart disease if they sleep less than seven and a half hours each night. For the study, 1,225 people with a history of hypertension and an average age of 70 years were monitored for 50 months by means of a sleep diary and a blood pressure monitor that recorded their blood pressure every 30 minutes 24/7. When the incidence of stroke, heart attack and sudden cardiac death was examined, it was found that the risk of cardiovascular events was about 33% higher in those who slept less than seven and a half hours and had high blood pressure. Previous research has shown that lack of sleep can lead to depression and a weakened immune system. "Sleep is important [for everyone], from children to the elderly," said Dr. Kazuo Eguchi, the study's lead author from the Jichi Medical University in Japan. "But it is more important when someone has some cardiovascular risk factors like hypertension." (*Time*. November 14, 2008.)

Q: How do I know when I need a chiropractic treatment?

A: If you have never had chiropractic care before, it may be difficult to know when to seek treatment from a Doctor of Chiropractic. Pain is the usual symptom that prompts the first visit to the chiropractor, but a growing number of people are seeking chiropractic care to enhance their overall health and well-being.

A person's need for chiropractic treatment varies greatly depending on his or her general health, physical condition, age, lifestyle, past history of health and injury, and hereditary factors. But the presence of pain is not necessarily the best indicator that chiropractic treatment is needed – once a condition has reached the point of pain, a great deal of strain and irritation has already occurred.

Some people choose ongoing chiropractic care either to minimize existing conditions or to prevent problems from occurring or recurring. Just as we periodically see other healthcare providers – such as gynecologists, ophthalmologists, and dentists – to prevent problems, the same can be said for chiropractors preventing problems of the musculoskeletal system. The warning signals that occur prior to the onset of pain include restricted movement in areas of your neck, back, shoulders, arms, or legs; noticing unbalanced postures in the mirror, a feeling of tension that does not go away with relaxation; restless sleeping; or irritability. The sooner you seek chiropractic care at the onset of these signals the more efficient your care will be and the sooner you can return to health.

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