

Golf Elbow - Who Needs It?

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I do not believe anyone wants pain, likes pain, or has to live with pain. So let us talk about golf elbow.

What exactly is golf elbow? Turn your thumb away from your body. There is a muscle that starts above the elbow on the inside and runs across the top of your lower arm. It hooks to the hand on the first and second fingers. This muscle is called the flexor carpi radialis. You can also feel it if you squeeze your hand and many times the muscle will pop up. When the tendon of this muscle becomes aggravated or over used a person can develop what is called “golf elbow”.

What is a tendon? Tendons hold the muscle to the bone and are very strong. However, when they tear, scar tissue is formed, weakening the integrity of the muscle. Tendons do not heal well because the blood supply is limited.

What causes this particular tendon to become aggravated? Most of the time, “golf elbow” is caused by stress, overuse, or by the way in which you swing the club. Many times the way you grip the club can be causing stress, ask your Golf Pro for any recommendations.

What can you do about it? You have several ways to take care of this situation.

Rest is the best step to take first, but do not stop there. **Ice** should be used as often as possible.

Why use ice? Ice is used to help release metabolites (waste products). When you use ice there are four sensations you will feel **-cold, burning, aching,** and **numbness.** When your arm reaches the numbness stage (10-20 minutes), take the ice off. Ice cups are good to use.

To make an ice cup: freeze water in a paper

cup, then peel away the paper moving the ice up and down your arm until the four stages are reached. After your arm is numb, get a tennis ball and squeeze 6 to 10 time for three sets, keep the arm slightly bent and the wrist straight. Then repeat the ice and the exercise. If possible, do this 2 to 3 times each night. There are several other exercises which can be done in addition to the tennis ball squeeze; however, this one is very effective.

Can you alternate heat and ice? Yes. This can sometimes be very effective in the healing process. When alternating, always let your skin go to normal body temperature before switching methods.

How long should this be continued? You should see some positive results within 4 to 6 weeks. If you are continuing to play golf while you are still having discomfort, realize the tendon will take longer to heal and may never fully recover. If you have had chronic or long term “golf elbow” it may take even longer to heal.

What other alternatives are there? Massage is wonderful for “golf elbow” and can be used in conjunction with ice. Stretching is also very effective, especially before and after playing golf. If the pain still persists, see a qualified Orthopedic physician. They may have other options including injections with a corticosteroid which can be another form of treatment; however, realize many times injections can deteriorate the muscle grouping.

Remember, you do not have to live with pain!

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