Golfer's Elbow
(Medial Epicondylitis)

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Is golfer's elbow getting in the way of your perfect swing? The good news is that with proper treatment, patients with golfer's elbow can successfully reach a full recovery.

"People often develop medial epicondylitis with activities that involve a repeated gripping motion or stress on the forearm tendons—golf, rock climbing, weight training, baseball, etc."

Golfer's elbow, also called medial epicondylitis, is a condition in which certain tendons attached to the side of the elbow closest to the body become inflamed and sore. These tendons aid several muscles used to move the hand and wrist.

The elbow has two bony prominences; the medial epicondyle is on the side closest to the body and the lateral epicondyle is on the opposite side. The muscles that bend the wrist up when the palm is facing up are anchored to the medial epicondyle. These muscles also help with gripping and squeezing of the hand. Muscles are generally anchored to bones via tough fibers called tendons, which become inflamed and swollen with repetitive movements or increased strain.

Symptoms

Symptoms of golfer's elbow typically include:

» Pain and tenderness, usually on the side of the elbow closest to the body
» Pain down the inside of the forearm, or into the upper arm
» Stiffness in the elbow
» Weakness in the hand or wrist

Causes

People often develop medial epicondylitis with activities that involve a repeated gripping motion or stress on the forearm tendons—golf, rock climbing, weight training, baseball, etc. Tasks other than sports, like manual labor with lots of repeated bending at the elbow can make people prone to this issue. As a person ages, tendons may also lose some of their strength and integrity and become more susceptible to injury. Tendons can also become inflamed, injured, or prone to injury from underlying conditions like rheumatoid arthritis.

Diagnosis

Golfer's elbow is typically diagnosed with a physical exam. During the examination, the doctor will ask the patient to straighten their elbow and flex their wrist with the palm facing up. If pain is felt on the inside of the elbow, it's an indication that the patient likely has golfer's elbow. The diagnosis can be confirmed with an MRI.

Nonsurgical treatment options

The initial treatment for medial epicondylitis involves:

» Rest
» Ice
» Anti-inflammatory medication or acetaminophen
» Elbow bracing
» Physical therapy

If symptoms continue despite conservative treatment, surgery may be an option.

"A typical recovery time after this procedure is four to six months."

How surgery is performed

Surgery for golfer's elbow is done through a cut on the inside part of the elbow. This way, the place where the tendon attaches to the bone can easily be seen. Scar tissue and inflammation at this site are cleaned up and removed, and the tendon is evaluated for any further damage and repaired if necessary.

Recovery time

Medial epicondyle repair is done as an outpatient surgery, which means you will go home on the day of your surgery. Dr. Romeo will give you specific instructions to manage any post-op pain. Your elbow will be placed in a splint for one week after surgery, after which time the splint is removed and your elbow is supported in a sling for another three weeks, if needed.

Results

After the initial four weeks of recovery, physical therapy then begins to restore your range of motion, followed by a strengthening program. A typical recovery time after this procedure is four to six months.

FAQs

Are there any ways to prevent golfer's elbow?

Yes. Regularly stretching and strengthening of your forearm muscles can go a long way in preventing golfer's elbow. Stretching the forearm and wrist can help with elbow stability. Strengthening exercises are very helpful as well. Stand with your hand at your side, holding a light weight or resistance band. Start by slowly curling up the wrist, then bend the elbow to 90° or all the way up.

Even simple exercises such as squeezing a tennis ball, while focusing on using your ring and pinky fingers can help you prevent medial epicondylitis, and strengthen your muscles so that they will be better able to absorb sudden forces during activity.

Want to learn more? Find relevant videos, animations, and research material related to this procedure at **anthonyromeomd.com**. ➔

For more information about causes and treatment of elbow tendonitis, please request an appointment with experienced Chicago orthopaedic surgeon Dr. Anthony Romeo.

Please visit our website to find out how to schedule your appointment.