

Elbow Pain

We were unable to identify an authoritative, non-copyrighted article on elbow pain. However, an excellent article on elbow pain prepared by A.D.A.M., Inc. for the U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health is available for free on-line viewing at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003172.htm>.

To obtain a free copy of the present document, go to www.masterdocs.com.

Some causes of chronic elbow pain are:

- Tendinitis (inflammation or injury to the tendons attaching muscle to bone), e.g. tennis or golf elbow.
- Other elbow injuries related to gardening, baseball, using a screwdriver, or overusing the wrist.
- Bursitis -- inflammation of a fluid-filled cushion beneath the skin. You may feel a lump over the tip of the elbow.
- Arthritis -- narrowing of the joint space and loss of cartilage in the elbow.
- Elbow strain (muscle injury), sprain (ligament injury) or fracture (broken bone).
- Infection of the elbow.
- Young children may get elbow subluxation (partial dislocation) from a caregiver pulling on their straightened arm.

The acute treatment of elbow pain is based on the **RICE** regimen:

- **Rest:** Rest the elbow joint for 2-3 days. Do not return to an activity that may have caused the pain for several weeks. A sling may help severe cases.
- **Ice:** Apply ice packs using a towel over a plastic bag to the area that is painful. Be careful to avoid frostbite. Apply ice for ¼ hour every hour for 24 hours.
- **Compression:** An ACE bandage or other soft elastic material should be applied to the elbow to help prevent the development of edema (fluid in the tissues).
- **Elevation:** Elevating the elbow helps in removing edema. By having the elbow higher than the heart, gravity is used to pull edema out of the elbow.

Additional acute therapy of elbow pain can include pain relievers such as acetaminophen. After the acute phase, muscle strengthening exercises may help.

Treatment of the several causes of chronic elbow pain depends on the cause of the pain. Chronic tennis elbow may require pain relievers such as acetaminophen or a steroid injection into the elbow, or (rarely) surgery. Olecranon bursitis may require drainage (aspiration) of the fluid in the bursa, or (rarely) removal of the bursa.

Contact your health care provider for:

- Elbow pain that does not improve after several weeks.
- Severe pain caused by a direct injury to the elbow.
- The elbow appears deformed.
- Elbow pain associated with inability to move at the elbow joint.
- Signs of infection (red and hot elbow, or a fever).

The web page at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003167.htm> states:

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