

Pickleball Elbow



"Pickleball Elbow" is similar to "Tennis Elbow" and medically referred to as Lateral Epicondylitis. Tendons at the elbow can sustain micro tearing and become inflamed. It can be quite painful and not only limit one's ability to play Pickleball, but also limit daily activities involving grasping or lifting.

Symptoms: Pain to lateral (outside) aspect of elbow with grasping, lifting, holding paddle, hitting ball.

Causes: Muscle imbalances (tightness, weakness) in the forearm can contribute to this condition. Repetitive use (playing too much especially if just starting or after a break from playing). Poor mechanics with using paddle can also be a cause.

Treatment: First, and foremost, REST from playing! This is usually the most difficult thing for any athlete, whether professional or recreational, but necessary for proper healing. Medical consult, such as with a Physical Therapist, can help determine the issues leading to Pickle Ball Elbow and make sure your symptoms are not coming from another area such as the shoulder or neck. The vast majority of the time, this can be accomplished with a physical evaluation and does not require any special imaging, such as x-ray or MRI, unless it is a chronic issue or there was some direct trauma.

Self-care: There are several options for self-care. This can include ice, use of various topical ointments or over the counter medication (pain relieving, anti-inflammatory). Counter force bracing/straps can also help. These are usually short-term fixes. Once one knows more exactly what is causing the issue then other self-care treatments can be implemented such as stretching, strengthening exercises.

Physical Therapy: Physical Therapy should start with a comprehensive evaluation to determine the cause of your symptoms. Once this is determined, Physical Therapy treatment may consist of using therapeutic ultrasound, LASER and/or electrical stimulation to decrease pain and promote tissue healing. Other treatment may consist of various manual therapy techniques, such as soft tissue mobilization, specific stretching/strengthening exercises, body mechanics instruction, kinesio tape and instruction in self-care/home management.

Recovery Time Frame: Many factors can determine recovery time including duration of symptoms before receiving treatment, age and other medical conditions. Allowing three to six weeks is a general guideline, but could be less or more depending on the above-mentioned factors along with sticking to any treatment plan.

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