Elbow and Arm Pain

Understanding discomfort, causes and recovery

Elbow and Arm Pain: Understanding and Management

A guide to causes, treatment and exercises



How can elbow and arm pain affect you?

Pain can make gripping, lifting, carrying, typing and everyday arm movements difficult. Some people also notice stiffness, weakness or tingling.

Simple steps that may help

Adapt painful activities, take regular breaks and keep the arm moving gently within comfort. Seek assessment if symptoms persist, worsen or follow an injury.

Common causes and symptoms

Recognising what may be contributing to elbow and arm pain

Tennis elbow (lateral epicondylitis)

Repetitive wrist and forearm movements can overload the tendons and cause pain on the outside of the elbow.

Golfer's elbow (medial epicondylitis)

Overuse of the forearm muscles may cause pain on the inside of the elbow.

Bursitis

Inflammation of the bursa at the back of the elbow can cause tenderness, pain and swelling.

Cubital tunnel syndrome

Pressure on the ulnar nerve can cause tingling, numbness or weakness, particularly in the ring and little fingers.

Muscle strain

Overstretching or tearing a muscle may cause local pain, weakness and difficulty moving the arm.

Important information

Seek medical advice for severe or persistent pain, marked swelling, numbness or loss of arm function. Symptoms following a significant injury should be assessed promptly.

Exercises and rehabilitation

Gentle movements to support flexibility and strength

Elbow and arm exercise guide

Exercise gently. Stop or modify movements if pain increases.



Exercise safety

Use controlled movements and avoid forcing painful stretches. A physiotherapist can help select exercises appropriate for your condition.

Treatment and management

Practical options and when to seek help

1. Rest and ice

Rest or adapt activities that aggravate pain. Ice wrapped in a towel may help relieve swelling and discomfort.

2. Physiotherapy

A physiotherapist can guide stretching and strengthening to improve movement and arm function.

3. Pain relief

Medicines such as ibuprofen may help in some cases. Ask a healthcare professional or pharmacist about suitability.

4. Bracing or splinting

A brace or splint may provide support and limit movement when clinically appropriate.

5. Surgery

In severe or persistent cases, surgical treatment may be considered after other approaches have not helped.

Important information - when to seek help

Seek medical advice for persistent or severe pain, swelling, numbness or loss of function. Early assessment can help guide treatment.

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