

YOUR GROUP23

PATIENT HEALTH JOURNEY

BECOME AN EXPERT: Tennis Elbow

Understanding Tendons and Tendinopathy

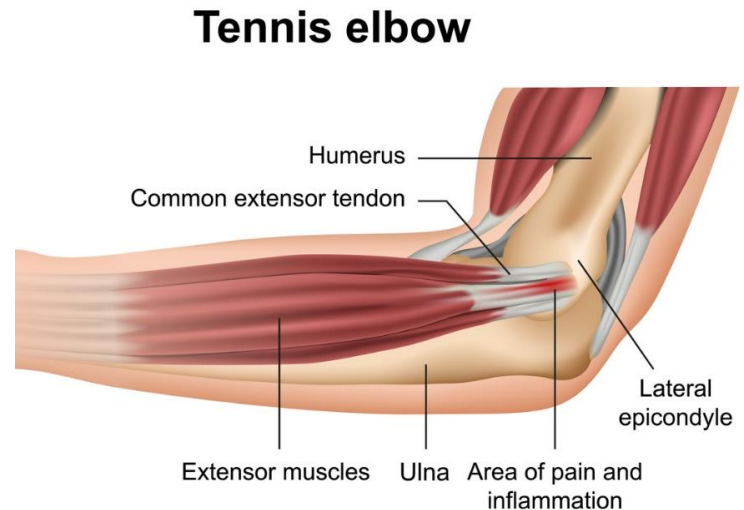
Tendons are living tissues within our bodies that attach muscles to bones. The primary role of tendons is to transmit force generated by a contracting muscle, thereby allowing movement to occur. Tendons are made up of layers upon layers of cells called tenocytes that are organized along force lines, meaning the direction in which they are pulled by muscles. We like to describe tendons as “white” tissues – meaning they don’t have a large amount of blood supply (compared to say a muscle – which is a “red” tissue with a lot of blood supplying muscle cells with oxygen).

Tendons are frustratingly slow to heal because the healing process in the body requires blood and its constituent cells (like platelets). Since tendons are “white” tissue, they lack rich blood supplies that facilitate healing. When tendons age, are injured, or break down due to repetitive stresses, they become unhealthy - this is referred to as a “**Tendinopathy**” or “**Tendinosis**”. If even more stress is applied, the tendon may tear – partially or completely.

An important concept to understand as it relates to tendons is **load capacity**. Load capacity simply means that tendon tissues can only absorb a certain amount of force before they begin to break down. An acute, sudden force applied to the tendon may cause it to tear or rupture. Most individuals will remember an acute injury, such as slipping on ice and feeling immediate pain afterward. Other times, an injury may be more chronic in nature, meaning that it is a gradual overloading of the tendon that slowly breaks it down over an extended period of time. This chronic breakdown can occur during an activity you have always done without pain, such as going for a walk or up and down stairs.

Another equally important concept pertaining to tendons is something called **optimal loading**. Optimal loading means that as a living tissue, tendons actually need to be loaded to keep healthy and strong. When people injure or overuse a tendon it causes pain, which can lead to decreased usage or over-protection of the affected area. However, reducing the use of the tendon can also cause it to weaken over time.

Aging is another factor that naturally causes tendons to slowly and steadily weaken. We know it's unavoidable; as we age, so do our tissues. This leads us again to the concept of optimal loading; your aging tendons are more likely to remain strong and healthy if you continue to use them and we can help find the appropriate activities, exercises, and modifications to keep you moving!



BECOME AN EXPERT cont'd

So what is Tennis Elbow?

Lateral elbow tendinopathy or **tennis elbow** is a common disorder characterized by pain on the outside of the elbow. It is an overuse injury caused by repetitive strain of the muscles that move the wrist and arm and attach via a tendon to the elbow. When this tendon becomes irritated, it can result in pain, weakness, and stiffness in the affected arm. Tennis elbow is a prevalent condition in athletes who engage in repetitive gripping activities, such as tennis players and golfers, but it can also occur in individuals with occupations that demand repeated wrist and forearm motions.

In the early stage, there is an inflammatory process that occurs. The condition can then persist and is defined as chronic when symptoms have been present for longer than 3 months. Up to 20% of individuals can experience symptoms after one year.

Why does this matter?

At Group23, we often see patients frustrated with their symptoms, lack of improvement, and the cost of ineffective treatments, products, and devices. Often the biggest issue we see with a diagnosis is the patient's lack of knowledge of the subject because no one has taken the time to explain what is truly happening! It's not enough to just know the word tendinopathy; it's important to us that you understand what it means!

Now you know more about tendons, loading capacity, and optimal loading, we can address treatment options that will allow you to load tendon tissues in a way that will make them stronger. No matter where you start, you can get to the point of less pain and improved functionality... **IF** you create good SMART goals, utilize the options in your Toolkit, and commit to working proactively with your Group23 Health Journey team!

Our care philosophy

We see treatment choices as a Patient Health Journey, and we take pride in being on this Journey with you the entire way. The most crucial part is becoming an expert and creating Rise Above goals specific to you and your lifestyle. Once your Group23 healthcare team understands your destination, we can accurately create a treatment plan that is fit for you!



Check out a free lifestyle assessment, available with the Health & Wellness team!



Surgery is a possibility, but a last resort option in the case of tennis elbow. We have a whole Toolkit of other options to try first!



Becoming an expert and setting a SMART goal ensures every treatment decision reflects your priorities, not ours!



GROUP23
SPORTS MEDICINE