Tennis Elbow Exercises

This advice and exercise sheet is designed to help resolve or settle your tennis elbow symptoms. Not all the suggestions will suit everyone, but we hope that you will find some of the information useful. This is a self-limiting condition and will inevitably improve.

Your main aim is to relieve the pain and allow the symptoms to settle. This can be done by:

1. Using ice packs.
2. Avoiding aggravating activities such as lifting.
4. Using an elbow clasp.
5. Gentle controlled exercises.

Using ice packs for pain relief and inflammation reduction

Ice packs will help to reduce inflammation, muscle spasm and pain. A packet of frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel makes a very effective ice pack. Apply it to the painful area (the bony part on the outside of your elbow) for 20 minutes, whilst in a resting position. This can be repeated 3-4 times daily if it is helpful. Be careful, ice can burn in bony areas or where circulation is poor. You can use ice packs before or after exercise to help with pain relief.

Aggravating activities to avoid

Where possible try to avoid the following activities:

1. Lifting.
2. Driving. If you must drive it should be for short distances only.
3. Prolonged repetitive movements.
4. Gripping activities.

Medication

Make sure you are taking the medication prescribed by your GP.

Elbow clasp

Various methods of strapping or splinting the forearm may be tried to relieve the strain on it. In particular an ‘epicondylitis clasp’ may help if worn during activities that aggravate the pain. These can be purchased from a pharmacy or sports store.

Forearm strengthening exercises

1. Scapula setting
   This posture needs to be adopted throughout all the following exercises. Sit up tall, gently tuck your shoulder blades back as if trying to make your shoulders broader.
   Reps: ________ Sets: ________ Times a day: ________

2. Try gripping some putty or a soft ball without bringing on your pain.
   Reps: ________ Sets: ________ Times a day: ________

3. a) Sitting with your arm resting on a table, elbow at your side, gently extend and flex your wrist, palm down then palm up.  
   b) When you can do this without pain, try adding a small weight such as a small tin of beans.
   Reps: ________ Sets: ________ Times a day: ________
4  a) Sitting with your arm at your side, elbow at 90° and keeping your elbow tucked in, alternate your palm so it faces up then down.
   b) When you can do this without pain, try it with a weight such as a hammer.
   Reps: _____ Sets: _____ Times a day: ____

5  a) Sitting with your arm straight down by your side and keeping your elbow still, move your hand from side to side in a waving motion.
   b) When you can do this without pain, add a weight such as a small tin of beans.
   Reps: _____ Sets: _____ Times a day: ____

General strengthening exercises
In addition to your elbow we also need to work on your upper arm strength.

1  Lying on your back, with your elbow and shoulder at 90°, lift a weight towards the ceiling with your affected arm.
   Reps: _____ Sets: _____ Times a day: ____

2  Standing, with your elbow at your side and your arm straight, bend your elbow taking your hand towards your shoulder.
   Reps: _____ Sets: _____ Times a day: ____

3  Lying on your back with your hand behind your head, straighten your arm.
   Reps: _____ Sets: _____ Times a day: ____

Stretching
Common extensor origin stretch

1  Stretch our your affected arm. Allow your wrist to drop down (bend). Increase the stretch by using your other hand.
   Hold for 30 seconds and repeat three times.