

Tennis-elbow treatment by Sepp Baumgartner

Trigger point tennis

Preventive measures

Don't try to save on technique training. Proper stroke technique is especially important. Moreover, whole-body training in addition to tennis is recommended.

Tennis is a one-sided sport which strengthens the muscles unilaterally. The spine is unevenly loaded and can radiate pain into the arm. Especially the back, abdominal and shoulder muscles must be trained equally.

Warm up before the game.
Select suitable material.
Your trainer will be happy to advise you.

The following factors should be considered when buying a racket :

- Good vibration damping
- Beginners play with softer racket frames
- Grip strength should be chosen such that at least a little finger fits in between the middle finger and thumb
- Good string should be selected or, even better, natural gut; beginners need a softer stringing than experts.

Stretching after training is especially important. Training strengthens the muscles, but tends to shorten them. The consequences are often muscle cramps or sprains and tendonitis. So be sure to stretch particularly loaded parts immediately after training - optimally, under a warm shower.

The acute tennis elbow

The acute tennis elbow occurs when the irritation is still fresh or very intense. Experience has proven the following measures to be helpful in cases of acute tennis elbow: Rest the arm. The longer the symptoms are present, the longer and more difficult it is to get rid of them. In addition, anti-inflammatory treatment is advisable.



Two- to three-minute cooling under cold running water or with ice immediately upon the occurrence of symptoms has a particularly positive effect. Important: Continue to apply cold several times a day while stretching the muscles. After cooling, keep the arm warm again, but do not heat artificially do not massage, as this exacerbates the inflammation.

In cases of extremely severe pain, you should consult a physician. Minor complaints which do not disappear even after several days should also be treated medically.

Caution should be exercised after a rest and especially after injections. A carefully dosed rehabilitative training is absolutely necessary, since a relapse can be very problematic.

Only when the pain has subsided to a large extent and the arm has been strengthened by rehabilitation training, can one cautiously start with tennis again, ideally under the guidance of a coach.

The chronic tennis elbow

We speak of a condition chronic when the irritation has already gone on for months or years, but has improved enough for the arm to be loaded. Chronic pain cannot be relieved by rest, and injections are often ineffective. Heat-active-cold stretching therapy offers good chances of success. The combination of heat, cold, stretching and rehabilitation training, if properly applied, creates optimal conditions for recovery. Heat and exercise promote blood flow and stabilize the arm; cold stretching inhibits inflammation and relaxes the muscles.

The following tips can help promote the healing process in cases of chronic tennis elbow:

1. Heat therapy

In cases of chronic inflammation, heat is especially important. During exercise, but also during the day and at night, the arm must be kept warm. Before intense pressure, i.e., before playing tennis, the muscles should be warmed by performing special exercises (see the arm exercises further down). In addition, one can massage oneself with an ointment which stimulates blood circulation.



2. Active therapy

The arm and shoulder muscles should be exercised daily (see arm exercises). In cases of chronic inflammation, the arm can also be trained by playing tennis. The premise here is, however, a targeted warming up and good stroke technique. By daily, dosed training, preferably once and maximum twice per day, in conjunction with subsequent stretching and cooling, chronic inflammations heal faster than with conventional immobilization. Note: Loading without subsequent cooling increases the inflammation!

3. Stretching cold therapy

Immediately after exercise, the muscles and tendons are stretched and cooled, as the irritated muscle tends to shorten or even cramp and overload the tendon permanently.

How to cool:

First, pre-stretch under a hot shower for about 20 seconds; then, more stretching under a cold shower or by rubbing with ice about two minutes. As a result of the stretching cold therapy, the muscle remains long and the inflammation abates.

How to stretch during cooling :

In the event of outer elbow pain, make a fist, extend the arm and rotate it inward so that the thumb lies underneath. In cases of inner elbow pain, stretch the arm and fingers and turn them outward so that the palm faces upward. After cooling, keep the arm warm with clothing (e.g., angora sock).

4. Easing the muscles

Easing of the muscles in the arm and especially in the shoulder and cervical area with massage promotes the healing process often radically.

5. A healthy diet

A varied diet (with little sugar, salt, fat) and the absence of alcohol and smoking increase the inner healing process.

6. Tennis-elbow bandage

For heavier loads, the arm can be relieved by a special tennis-elbow bandage. The "med- Epico" bandage is to be recommended because it has a Velcro closure with which to vary the pressure; as a result blood-flow disturbances can be completely avoided.



7. More tips

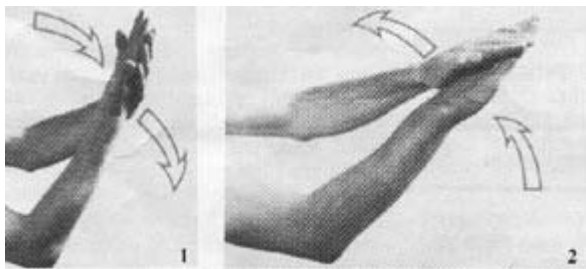
Other treatment options that can positively influence the healing process consist of professional massages directly on the painful spot, acupuncture, reflexology, electric-laser-, X-ray-shock waves and stimulation therapy. If all therapies are exhausted, surgery remains as a last resort.

Exercises for the daily training and warming up before the game

Note : Perform all exercises only so intensely that you feel nothing more than mild pain!

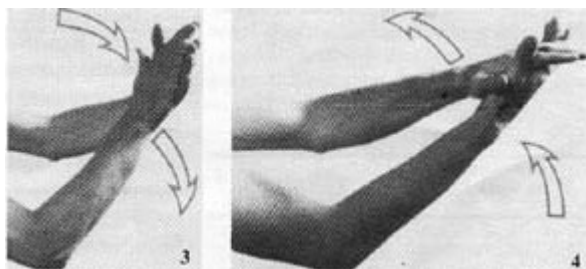
1. Arm muscles

Bend the affected arm to the chest and alternately straighten completely. The free hand increases the effect of the exercise by dosed pressure. Each exercise is repeated 20-50 times.



Exercises 1 and 2 for outer tennis elbow:

In Nr. 1, the free hand presses against the back of the hand from the outside; in Nr. 2, it presses from inside.



Exercises 3 and 4 for the inner tennis elbow inside (golfer arm):

In Nr. 3, the free hand presses against the palm from the outside; in Nr. 4, it presses against the palm from the inside.

2. Finger muscles

Alternating fingers and arms 50-100 times - stretch out and then bend arms and make a fist.



3. Shoulder muscles

Make circles with the elbow 20-40 times on both sides, clockwise and counterclockwise. The free hand hooks onto the elbow and thus intensifies the exercise. During this exercise, one shoulder is loaded and the other stretched.

Duration of the healing process

In principle the healing process takes as long as the previous duration of illness. Chronic inflammations largely subside in about 95 percent of cases after six months. Approximately 40 percent of them are then symptom-free. After another year about 90 percent of the injured tendons are fully regenerated and can be loaded.

Finally, it should be stressed again that the most important requirement for avoiding or curing tennis elbow is proper stroke technique. So visit a well-trained coach who takes your personal style into account. If, for example, someone tends toward the backhand slice but performs it technically incorrectly, he shouldn't switch to topspin, but improve his slice instead.

