

## Tennis Elbow ~ Ouch!

*Poor You! Nobody likes to be injured, but tennis (and golfers) elbow is both painful and a pain in the ... arm!*

*At Top Spin Tennis we are frequently asked what can be done. This information sheet is designed to give some clear advice.*

So you have tennis elbow (or some other arm or shoulder injury). What can you do about it and what has caused it? It is caused by a physical strain – in tennis, it can be caused by using wet, heavy balls, a strenuous game, a change in technique (often on the serve or backhand) or it can afflict anyone doing a repetitive gripping or twisting activity (as simple as regular use of a computer mouse or painting – especially using a roller on a ceiling!)

The medical name for tennis elbow is 'lateral epicondylitis' – it affects the bony part you can feel on the outside of your elbow joint. Similarly, 'golfers elbow' (not confined to golfers) is 'medial (inside) epicondylitis' which causes pain on the bony part on the inside of the elbow joint.

### *So What Can Be Done?*



A trip to a physiotherapist is important to get a medical view of your injury – there may be another reason for the pain! From an equipment point of view, there are a number of different adjustments that can be made to your racket that will help (but not necessarily cure!). Most of the pain you get when playing, is unfortunately generated by vibrations transferred along the handle and into your arm when you don't hit the ball in the middle of the racket – OK, I know you never really do that!

To reduce the impact of this vibration, try one or all of the following:

1. Change or/and enlarge your grip:
  - Change the grip to a softer or thicker/more spongy grip
  - Putting another grip on top of the existing one
  - Heat shrink a sleeve directly onto the handle before replacing the grip - the shrink sleeve is the better 'enlarging' option as you don't lose the feel of the 'bevels'.
2. Restraining your racket
  - Use a 'soft' or multifilament string – the very best is natural gut
  - Use a thinner string, (obviously some durability will be sacrificed)
  - Use a more elastic string
  - Reduce the tension in the strings
3. Install a string dampener across as many of the main strings as possible
4. Wear an elbow support
5. Check your racket for any cracks or obvious signs of damage
6. Consider adding weight to your racket – especially at the 3 and 9 o'clock positions

You should also consider having a coaching lesson with an experienced coach. Quite often, tennis elbow is as a result of poor technique or a change in technique, a coach will be able to see if you are putting strain on your elbow as a result of your shot making!