WHAT'S WRONG?

Little League Elbow

Children and young adolescents have soft “growth plates,” which are areas where their bone is still growing. In children, this growth plate is somewhat weak until it fuses in late adolescence.

When your forearm muscles contract forcefully—like during pitching or throwing—they create a tremendous pull on the growth plate of your elbow where the forearm muscles attach. Pain or swelling develop when the growth plate, tendons, or muscles become irritated or begin to fail. This condition is named “little league elbow” because it strikes up to half of all youth baseball players; but the problem affects many other types of athletes too, typically between the ages of 7-16.

Symptoms usually present following an increase in innings or pitch count, without enough rest. You will often feel tenderness or even bony enlargement of your inner elbow (medial epicondyle). Pitchers may complain of decreased speed, accuracy, and distance. Be sure to tell your doctor if you are unable to fully straighten your elbow, or if you have a fever, unexplained weight loss, or night sweats.

Some athletes with mild cases may continue playing as long as it does not increase symptoms. Most cases may require two to eight weeks of rest to allow your elbow to heal. You can cross-train with most other activities that do not require forceful gripping.

You should be able to return to light throwing when the tenderness on your elbow resolves. Following a return to activity, monitoring pitch count and rest days are the key factors for avoiding problems. When you begin to throw, do not advance training by more than 10% per workout. Contrary to popular belief, pitch type does not affect elbow injury rates; in particular, curveballs are no more hazardous than any other pitch.

You should understand that some degree of inflammation is necessary for healing, and over-the-counter pain medication must never be used solely to allow you to keep throwing. Little league elbow can temporarily limit your activity, but most of the time it can be successfully managed, allowing your return to pain-free activity in a relatively short time.

THINGS WE CAN DO TO HELP YOU

Here is a brief description of the treatments we may use to help manage your problem.
Therapy Modalities
We may apply electrotherapy modalities that produce light electrical pulses transmitted through electrodes placed over your specific sites of concern. These comfortable modalities work to decrease your pain, limit inflammation and ease muscle spasm. Hot or cold packs are often used in conjunction, to enhance the effect of these modalities. Another available option is therapeutic ultrasound. Ultrasound pushes sound vibrations into tissues. When these vibrations reach your deep tissues, heat develops and unwanted waste products are dispersed.

Myofascial Release
Overworked muscles often become tight and develop knots or "trigger points". Chronic tightness produces inflammation and swelling that ultimately leads to the formation of "adhesions" between tissues. Your chiropractor will apply pressure with their hands, or with specialized tools, in order to release muscle tightness and soft-tissue adhesions. This will help to improve your circulation, relieve pain and restore flexibility.

Therapeutic Exercise
Muscle tightness or weakness causes discomfort and alters normal joint function, leading to additional problems. Your chiropractor will target tight or weak muscles with specific therapeutic stretching and strengthening to help increase tissue flexibility, build strength, and ease pain. Healthy, strong, and flexible muscles may help prevent re-injury.

Cold Therapy
The application of ice, also called cryotherapy, works by causing constriction of blood vessels. This limits swelling and provides a temporary numbing effect by slowing the transmission of nerve pain. We may use a variety of techniques to apply cold including; gel packs, ice bags, ice massage or a compressive ice cuff.

TREATMENT GOALS AND OUTCOME MEASURES
Your treatment will be most effective when scheduled at a rate of 3 times per week for 2 weeks. After this initial course of treatment we will reassess to make sure that you have met your initial treatment goal of at least 50% overall improvement. We will determine the need for any additional care after your reassessment.

THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP YOURSELF
Your everyday activities, habits, and postures can have a dramatic impact on your body. The following advice will help you minimize stress while improving your comfort and health:
Home Ice
Application of ice will help reduce inflammation by constricting swollen blood vessels. Ice may also help reduce muscle spasm and numb irritated nerves.
- Apply for 10-15 minutes. Break for 30 minutes. Reapply. (Alternatives to the ice pack include Ziploc bags filled with ice, or a bag of frozen vegetables.) Repeat several times a day as needed.
- Place a thin towel between your skin and the ice pack for comfort and safety.
- Use ice-massage for smaller areas. Begin by freezing a small paper cup of water. When frozen, tear off the bottom inch of the cup to expose the ice. Massage the indicated area for 5-10 minutes in a slow figure-eight pattern. Do not hold the ice in one position.

Youth Weightlifting Guidelines
Children and adolescents can safely enhance strength and health through a well-supervised weight lifting program that follows these guidelines:
- Learn the proper technique for any lift before starting. Choose a certified lifting coach with experience in pediatric strength training to supervise initial sessions.
- Start without resistance (no weight) until you have mastered proper technique.
- Strength training should involve 2 to 3 sets of 8 to 15 repetitions, 2 to 3 times per week.
- Don't forget to rest. Your body needs at least a few days of recovery time each week.
- A general strengthening program should address all major muscle groups, including the core, and also incorporate regular aerobic exercise training.
- Include a 10- to 15-minute warm-up and cool-down period.
- Avoid powerlifting, bodybuilding, and maximal lifts until physical and skeletal maturity.
- Drink adequate fluids (water) and choose proper nutrition to improve results.
- Never use performance-enhancing substances.
- Do not start training without medical clearance if you have a history of uncontrolled hypertension, seizure disorders, cancer, chemotherapy, or congenital heart disease.
- Stop training if you experience pain or suffer an injury. Seek professional advice before returning.

Pitching- Youth Guidelines
The USA Baseball Medical and Safety Advisory Committee has published widely endorsed age-specific recommendations for pitch limits per game, week, season, and year. You can view the Pitch Smart® guidelines at: https://www.mlb.com/pitch-smart/pitching-guidelines- Follow guidelines for your actual age as opposed to "league age."
- Do not pitch on consecutive days or in multiple games per day.
- Pitchers should not be utilized as catchers on "off days".
- Avoid pitching on multiple teams with overlapping seasons.
- Have a 2-4 month "off-season" that does not involve throwing.
- Young players should stay away from radar guns or other measurement devices that encourage them to consistently throw harder.

EXERCISES AT HOME
The following exercises have been specifically selected to assist with your recovery and help minimize future problems. Exercises should be performed slowly and within a relatively comfortable range. Maintain good posture and breathe naturally. Do not hold your breath. Unless otherwise instructed, stop any exercises that cause pain, or radiating symptoms.
Current Exercises

Wrist Flexor Stretch

**Perform 1 set of 3 contract/relax cycles, 2 times per day.**

Straighten your arm in front of you with your hand at chest level, palm up. Keep your elbow locked and use your opposite hand to grasp your fingers and gently pull down on your fingers until you feel a stretch in your forearm. Keep your elbow straight throughout the exercise. Against the resistance of your opposite hand, contract your wrist and fingers upward for seven seconds. Relax and increase the stretch on your wrist and forearm by pulling downward and backward on your fingers. "Lock in" to the new position and repeat three contract/relax cycles twice per day or as directed.

Wrist Wave

**Perform 3 sets of 10 reps, 2 times per day.**

Interlock your fingers then elevate both arms as though you were resting the underside of your forearms on a table at chest level. Your palms should be facing down, elbows out to the side. Begin performing a "wave" by flexing one of your wrists and letting it flow thorough the opposite wrist. Allow relaxed movement from your wrists, elbows and shoulders as you perform a smooth wave moving from one arm to the other. Initiate this flowing movement from one hand for 30 seconds, then the other for 30 seconds. Repeat as directed.

The following Upcoming exercises will be started at a later date as you progress. Do not begin Upcoming exercises until you are directed to do so by our office. You will continue your Current exercises until otherwise directed.
Upcoming Exercises

Wrist Supination/ Pronation

Perform 1 set of 30 reps, 1 time per day.
While standing with your arm outstretched in front of your abdomen, hold a weight or broomstick and rotate your hand from palm up to palm down. Perform as directed.

Hand Therapy Putty

Perform 1 set of 1 minute, 2 times per day.
Grasp and squeeze a piece of therapy putty or a small spongy ball. Perform as directed.

Eccentric Wrist Flexors

Perform 3 sets of 10 reps, 2 times per day.
Begin sitting with your forearm on a table or armrest with your hand off the edge, palm up as shown. Begin with your wrist in the flexed/up position. Grasp a weight with your hand and slowly lower at a count of four seconds. Release the weight and use your healthy arm to reset to the starting position. Perform as directed. This exercise may alternately be performed with an elastic band stretched between your hand and foot.

Reverse Tyler Twist

Perform 3 sets of 15 reps, 3 times per day.
Note: Allow at least 30-60 seconds of rest in between each of the three sets.
Grasp the Therabar with your involved wrist and elbow flexed, palm facing you. Next, fully extend your uninvolved arm, then flex your elbow so that you may grasp the opposite end of the Therabar with your hand facing down and your fingers pointing towards you. Both thumbs should be on the outside of the bar. While keeping your involved wrist flexed, twist the bar with the uninvolved arm until your knuckles line up. Keep your wrists flexed, but extend your elbow so that the bar is directly in front of you. Slowly extend the involved wrist (at a count of four seconds) to allow the bar to uncoil, while keeping the uninvolved side steady. When the bar has uncoiled, release with your unaffected hand, reset. Perform as directed.