

Acupuncture and Sports Injury

Amateur weekend warriors, as well as professional and top amateur athletes use acupuncture for the treatment of injuries, and to help optimize their conditioning. If you are wondering how acupuncture treatment can help your acute or chronic sports injury, contact me today. Every case is different and results vary, but generally our success rate is extremely high. Herbal medicine and nutritional support are discussed specifically for your condition. Feel free to bring in your orthopedic X rays or MRI narrative reports for review. TCM helps you get off and stay off western drugs like painkillers, and anti-inflammatory meds that are hard on your liver and kidneys. Long-term use of NSAIDS (aspirin, Tylenol, Etc.) breaks down cartilage and can cause liver and kidney trouble. Restore and reach optimum health naturally.

Acute Injury Treatment

Sprain and strain of the joint and surrounded tissue are common sports related injuries (sprain involves the ligament and strain involves muscle or tendon). Besides pain, inflammatory response may include swelling of the injured area, redness or purple skin discoloration, and reduced range of motion of the joint. In addition to conventional R.I.C.E (Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation) treatment, many athletes find acupuncture treatment very helpful in suppressing inflammation and swelling quickly. My patients schedule immediately after an injury or accident to begin the recovery and restoration process. I want you to get well quickly and fully recover. Acupuncture treatment is often overlooked and under-utilized. The activation of important pathways and “circuit boards” in your body can be crucial to effectively treating your acute trauma or repetitive-stress injuries.

Prolonged inflammation causes scar tissue formation and may prevent proper joint function or mobility.

How Acupuncture helps:

Acupuncture stimulates the nervous system and causes the release of chemical messenger molecules. The resulting biochemical changes influence the body’s self-regulating systems, stimulating its natural healing abilities. It brings new blood flow to the area, bringing nutrition. It reduces inflammation and restores tissue, ligaments, tendons, muscles, bones, discs, etc.

Research shows that acupuncture treatment promotes resolution of injuries by:

- Provides pain relief (Pomeranz, 1987).
- Increases local microcirculation (Komori et al, 2009) that aids dispersal of swelling and bruising.

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- Suppression of the peripheral inflammatory response (Kim et al, 2008) and other anti-inflammatory mechanisms (Kavoussi & Ross, 2007, Zijlstra et al, 2003).
- Breaks down scar tissue – controlled micro trauma causes a local inflammatory response, which initiates reabsorption of inappropriate fibrosis or excessive scar tissue and facilitates a cascade of healing activities resulting in remodelling of affected soft tissue structures.
- Promotes faster recovery after training sessions (Pan & Pan, 2007).

Acupuncture is effectively combined with other treatments such as massage and rehabilitation exercises.

Acupuncture Treatment for Tennis Elbow & Golfers Elbow

Acupuncture, is successfully used to treat tennis elbow. Tennis elbow is inflammation of the outside of the elbow. This area of the elbow is the bone called the lateral epicondyle, which is why tennis elbow is also known as lateral epicondylitis. The outer part of the elbow becomes painful and tender as a result of damage or tearing of the tendons and muscles of this area.

Golfer's elbow is quite similar to tennis elbow except the inflammation occurs on the inside of the elbow, around the bone called the medial epicondyle. It too can be treated with acupuncture. Golfer's elbow is also referred to as medial epicondylitis. The inner part of the elbow becomes painful and tender as a result of damage or tearing of the tendons and muscles of this area.

Causes of Tennis Elbow and Golfer's Elbow

The terms Tennis Elbow and Golfer's Elbow are misleading because most people don't develop them from playing tennis or golf. The conditions are often brought on by overused or strained muscles, which in turn lead to the inflammation. Activities such as painting, raking, pitching and hammering involve repetitive arm movements that overuse and strain the muscles of the elbow.

Sometimes the conditions can be the result of a single injury or, they can be brought on from other conditions such as arthritis. The problem may be due to problems in the neck, or there may be no explanation for the inflammation at all. Usually, however, any activity that involves excessive force or repetition when gripping, twisting or reaching can trigger tennis or golfer's elbow. The latter can be treated by the acupuncturist.

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Symptoms of Tennis Elbow and Golfer's Elbow

- Difficulty with movements such as gripping, lifting and carrying
- Pain and tenderness either on the outside of the elbow (tennis elbow) or on the inside of the elbow (golfer's elbow)
- Pain that radiates down the arm toward the wrist
- Difficulty extending the forearm

Tennis elbow is a result of overuse of the common extensor muscle group. The common extensor muscle group is not only excessively used by tennis players, but also computer users, typists, cash register operators, carpenters, and hair stylists. Tennis elbow is far more common than Golfer's elbow. General treatment procedures are similar for both but the following is specifically written for tennis elbow sufferers.

Evaluation Procedures:

Resistance Test (Cozen's test). This test is used to determine whether the pain gets worse when you bend your wrist back (extend it) against resistance. Small tissue damage around the elbow tendon attachment of the Extensor Carpi Radialis Brevis (the muscle that runs from the lateral epicondyle to the middle finger) can be found in many tennis elbow cases. In those cases, the patient will feel sharp shooting pain in the elbow by extending his/her middle finger against resistance.

Tenderness. Here we test for tenderness over or near the bony bump on the outside of the elbow. In the event of both these signs being present, it is likely that you have tennis elbow.

Grip Strength. Patients are asked to grip the dynamometer and stop as soon as pain is felt in the elbow (pain-free grip power), then grip with maximum power despite any pain (maximum grip power). Tennis elbow sufferers usually show a decreased maximum grip power and a large difference between pain free and maximum grip.

It is also important to examine your neck and upper chest regions, as factors in these areas may be fully or partly causing your pain.

What is the treatment?

The conventional approach often involves physiotherapy treatments, use of anti-inflammatory drugs, and may include an injection of a small dose of steroid to the affected area.

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Is there any natural alternative treatment?

Acupuncture and moxibustion (a Chinese heat therapy) treatment is used in order to decrease the hyper-tonicity of common extensor muscles.

In some acute cases, cryo (ice) massage is applied around the lateral epicondyle. After acute inflammation has subsided, the massage technique called transverse friction is often incorporated to break down the existing scar tissues around the tendons and restore normal tissue health.

Is there anything, besides the treatment, I can do or shouldn't do?

- Rest: The best way to relieve tennis elbow is to stop doing anything that irritates your arm — a simple step for the weekend tennis player, but not as easy for the manual laborer, office worker, or professional athlete.
- Wearing a Brace: For those who are unable to commit to complete rest, wearing a brace (especially designed for tennis elbow which helps decrease the stress on the lateral epicondyle) is recommended. In order to avoid muscle atrophy, the brace should be worn only at certain times of the day during activities and should be considered a temporary solution.
- Ice: Application of ice helps decrease the inflammation. During the acute phase of tennis elbow, it is recommended that you apply ice at home or office at least a couple times a day (10-15 minutes duration). Ice should also be applied immediately after any activity that has caused pain and in some cases after the treatment.
- Exercise: When the acute inflammation has subsided, I'll show you an exercise that is helpful for your condition. The exercise consists of strengthening the common flexor muscle group (which will help relax the extensor muscles through the mechanism of antagonist inhibition reflex) and stretching the common extensor muscles. You should avoid doing any weight exercise that puts stress on the common extensor muscles.

ACL Injury and Reconstruction

“Anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction failed to restore normal rotational knee kinematics during dynamic, functional loading and some degradation of graft function occurred over time. These abnormal motions may contribute to long-term joint degeneration associated with ACL injury and reconstruction.”