

December 2007

## Treating Tennis Elbow: Shock and Relief



If you have suffered the pain and frustration of recurrent tennis elbow, looking for a permanent solution is appropriate. Unfortunately, in the past, too often the quick or easy fix was not satisfactory, and even the well-performed rehabilitation program did not always resolve the condition. For these people, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's 2003 approval of a revolutionary treatment option, extracorporeal shockwave treatment (ESWT) may provide an option.

While still considered “experimental” by some physicians and insurance carriers, ESWT has been used for years in Europe with great success. The treatment takes around 20 minutes, usually under a light local anesthesia, and **involves using sound waves to actually cause slight damage to the tissues, which promotes a healing response, increases blood flow and curbs inflammation.** As an “extracorporeal,” or “outside the body” treatment, this procedure eliminates the risks and longer recovery period associated with invasive surgery.

There are actually two types of ESWT available for tennis elbow in the United States: high energy and low energy. The high-energy procedure delivers electrohydraulic high-energy shock waves to the affected area, forcing the body to repair the tendon by creating new tissue while also affecting pain receptors. Low-energy ESWT only affects the pain receptors and is more uncomfortable for the patient because no local anesthetic can be used.

**A growing number of patients suffering from certain conditions, including tennis elbow, have found significant relief from this low-risk procedure.** It may be a worthwhile option for those who have suffered from tennis elbow with little or no improvement from more conservative treatments. However, if you are thinking about trying ESWT, make sure to talk to your insurance company first—many carriers do not cover this treatment, and it can be expensive due to the equipment necessary for the procedure.

After the procedure, experts recommend that you take it easy for four weeks because most patients will experience bruising, swelling and temporary numbness. Complete healing may take as long as 12 weeks. Physical therapy is essential during this time to help with the transition back to your normal lifestyle. If you are suffering from tennis elbow, visit us to discuss your options (especially to ensure a well-designed rehabilitation sequence has been followed) including the possible benefits of this procedure and how we can help with your recovery.

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## In-flight Exercises: Staying Fit in the Air



**T**he media has paid a great deal of attention to suggestions that passengers exercise during flights, particularly those lasting four hours or more. Although some reports may have been sensationalized, it is true that exercise reduces the risk of deep vein thrombosis (DVT).

DVT is a condition where a clot occurs in a deep vein, typically in the lower leg, although it can occur in other areas such as the arm.

Most clots are small and will dissipate on their own. Larger ones may cause:

- **Swelling and pain in the calf;**
- **Intense pain upon standing; and**
- **A pulmonary embolism if the clot travels to your lungs, possibly resulting in death.**

**The longer a person is immobile, the greater the risk of DVT.** Therefore, experts believe that you can reduce your risk during airplane travel by exercising whenever possible. Clearly, however, this is no easy task, given the cramped parameters of an airplane.

One of the first things you can do to improve mobility during a flight is to stand up once each hour. Try to walk up and down the aisles several times, stopping to stretch whenever possible. You can also try these exercises:

- **Heel and calf raises by rising up on your toes;**
- **Squeeze a tennis ball or racquetball in your hand; and**
- **Ankle circles and knee lifts while seated.**

Remember that the risk of DVT is similarly present during car travel although, because people tend to stop for beverages, meals or toilet breaks, the risks may not be as great. If you travel by car, ensure that you take a rest stop at least once every two hours. When you do stop, be sure to stretch before doing any kind of exercise.

If you have plans for a long flight or car trip, talk to us about additional exercises and tips for reducing your risk of DVT. By taking simple measures to maintain a healthy body, you can keep your focus on enjoying your trip.

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## Hip Pain and the Labrum: The Root of the Problem



**W**ith many individuals today leading such active lifestyles, hip problems related to the labrum have become a common complaint at the doctor's office. If you have been diagnosed with this problem, you may still have some confusion regarding the dynamics of the pain and why it occurs.

Just like the meniscus of the knee, the labrum is comprised of fibrous tissue that follows the curved area of the femur and joins the pelvis, forming the hip joint. The labrum provides cushioning for the hip joint and maintains the ball's positioning in the socket. **Labral tears can occur from sports injuries or conditions such as osteoarthritis.** In particular, golfers tend to experience hip pain related to the labrum. Tears and other labrum

injuries are detectable by magnetic resonance imaging, which allows your physician to accurately identify and treat any problems.

Treatment for hip pain from the labrum usually involves one or more of the following:

- **Physical therapy;**
- **Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs);**
- **Corticosteroid injections; and/or**
- **Surgery.**

We can help design a program that best fits your treatment needs based on the severity and presentation of the pain and damage done to the labrum. A program of specific exercises can help you regain your strength, flexibility and range of motion. Your doctor may recommend NSAIDs or corticosteroid injections to help minimize the pain and reduce inflammation. If surgery is necessary for treatment, we will help you properly recover from the procedure with minimal difficulty, restoring your range of motion and increasing your muscle strength.

Whichever method you choose, we will help guide you through your activities to help prevent this painful condition from happening again. Fortunately, most people who obtain treatment for hip pain related to the labrum will experience relief and regain proper function.

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## A Wide-open Look at TMJ Disorder



Unfortunately, more than 10 million people in the United States alone suffer damage, pain or discomfort related to the temporomandibular joint (TMJ), and the vast majority of them are women. You actually have two of these joints, one on either side of your head, connecting the mandible (or lower jaw) to your skull. Given that you use these joints for chewing and even swallowing food and talking, it's vital that the cartilage and muscles associated with the TMJ are in great working order.

TMJ disorder, with a variety of causes and symptoms, is not always easily understood. Physical trauma to the jaw or surrounding muscles caused by a blow to the face, or inflammation from osteoarthritis, may cause the disorder. Emotional stress and anxiety causing one to grind or clench the teeth can also be a factor. Even a common activity such as chewing gum can exacerbate the condition. Symptoms vary depending on the individual but include:

- **Pain in the jaw or neck;**
- **Swelling on the sides of the face;**
- **Clicking or popping noises;**
- **Restricted movement of the jaw;**
- **Headaches;**
- **Dizziness; and**
- **Ear/hearing complaints.**

Dentists and physicians treat TMJ disorder with a number of methods including anti-inflammatory medications, biteplates, night guards and, in difficult cases, surgery. But before going to such lengths many advise a physical therapy program as a first option. **The main goal of physical therapy when treating TMJ disorder is to decrease pain and uncomfortable symptoms by decreasing muscle irritability and inflammation in the jaw area and helping to restore movement.** We can design a program that includes pain modulation, strengthening and stretching exercises, improvements in standing, sitting and sleeping postures, and behavior modifications like avoiding gum or chewy foods. With good self-care and physical therapy, we can often help you deal with this disorder leading to a more comfortable lifestyle.

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## Simple Steps to Starting a Weight-training Program



One of the challenges of weight training is determining the appropriate amount of effort to put in for the most benefits. A little may not be enough for an impact, while too much may be detrimental to your health. Extensive research recommends a weight-training program of two sets of eight to 12 repetitions per set, three times per week. **Regular weight training within these parameters is thought to successfully**

**provide maintenance and growth for muscles.**

When performed three times a week, weight training can help to increase bone density and strength while also allowing you to burn more calories, even when at rest. The following steps are easy ways to incorporate strength training into your day:

- **Lift weights at home or during an office break;**
- **Consider joining a strength-training class or gym; and**
- **Try weight training with a friend to keep you on track.**

To achieve the maximum benefits of a weight-training program there are some things to consider.

- **Find the appropriate amount of weight you can handle and only increase the amount when you are ready.** The amount of weight will ultimately determine the impact you make on improving your health and overall fitness.
- **Space weight-training days evenly so that you are not working the same muscle group on two consecutive days.** It's important to allow sufficient recovery time after weight training, allowing your muscles to repair themselves adequately following exercise.
- **Stick to the program.** Not enough sets or too few repetitions may not be enough to make a difference, while too many repetitions or too much weight may be counterproductive to your goals and cause injuries.

Consult us to begin a program today. We will help design the program to match your desired outcomes. Scheduling time for regular weight training can seem challenging, but the benefits to your strength and overall fitness are well worth the effort. Goals are important!