

Tendonitis

Painful Inflammation of a Soft Tissue Tendon

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Condition Sheet



Common forms of tendonitis are named after the sports that increase their risk: tennis elbow, golfer's elbow, pitcher's shoulder, swimmer's shoulder and jumper's knee. But tendonitis is not limited to high-level athletes. In fact, it is most common in seniors and middle-aged people.

Tendons are flexible bands of tissue that connect muscles to bones and help your muscles move your bones. Tendonitis results when a tendon becomes inflamed.

Left untreated, tendonitis can worsen and cause limited mobility, so it's important to seek medical attention for this condition. Our network of board certified pain specialists can quickly diagnose tendonitis and offer you an individualized, non-surgical plan for healing tendonitis and relieving your pain.

What is tendonitis?

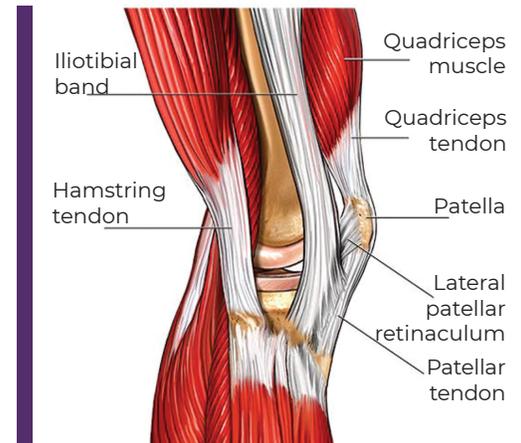
Tendonitis typically occurs near joints that perform frequent repetitive motion: shoulders, elbows and hips. Older individuals are susceptible because the tendon, which is like a rubber band under tension, loses some elasticity and sustains hundreds of microscopic tears due to wear and tear over the years.

The pain of tendonitis is felt where the tendon attaches to a bone. The symptom is often described as a dull ache, especially when moving the affected limb or joint. There is usually tenderness and possibly swelling.

The need for an accurate diagnosis

Tendonitis can be mistaken for other conditions, such as arthritis, because both conditions manifest as joint pain. However, arthritis is a disease of the joint itself. Therefore, treatments could be quite different.

Tendonitis also is mistaken for bursitis, an inflammation of the bursa, which is a sack of fluid that is located between tendons and bones. The bursa acts as a cushion, protecting the tendon when it moves over a bone. Often tendonitis and bursitis are related; because the structures are located close to



each other, they can become inflamed simultaneously and the pain symptoms are similar. Importantly, the treatment for both problems is the same.

Diagnosis of tendonitis calls for a careful medical history and physical exam to rule out arthritis or bone problems. Your physician may order imaging tests to provide more information about the injury. For example, with tennis elbow, an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) can provide a detailed image if it is not clear which tendon in the elbow is injured.

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The importance of treatment

If you have tendonitis, treatment should begin immediately to prevent further injury. Initially, tendonitis may be treated with rest, ice packs and oral anti-inflammatory medications. If these measures fail to relieve the pain, your physician may recommend an injection of a local anesthetic and a corticosteroid for the area of the tendon. The local anesthetic provides early pain relief, while the steroid suppresses inflammation and decreases swelling for long-term pain relief. Although the corticosteroid

medication does not change the underlying problem, it can break the cycle of irritation and pain, allowing the body to begin healing.

Depending on the location of the pain, fluoroscopy (live x-ray) may be used to ensure accurate needle placement. Pain relief usually occurs within 48 hours.

Other treatment options for tendonitis include minimally invasive regenerative procedures, such as prolotherapy, or platelet rich plasma (PRP) therapy and stem cell therapy, which boost the body's natural healing processes.

Once tendonitis goes away, preventing the condition from coming back is crucial. Proper conditioning and splints or pads to protect affected areas can be helpful.

Tendonitis typically responds well to treatment, and the board-certified pain specialists at our network of pain management centers are best suited to provide you with a tailored treatment plan that returns you to an active lifestyle—and keeps you there.

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