When Do We Need a Doctor?
When Can We Care For Ourselves?

Anne-Britt Dekker
David Ring
The Placebo Effect
Why Does My Elbow Hurt?

Your elbow lets you throw, lift, swing, and hug, for starters. You can do all this because it’s not a simple joint. And that means, from sports injuries to even elbow, there are a lot of ways things can go wrong.

Your elbow’s a joint formed where three bones come together -- your upper arm bone, called the humerus, and the ulna and
allow you to move your arm in different ways.

If anything happens to any of these parts, not to mention the nerves and blood vessels around them, it can cause you pain.

Here are some of the different ways your elbow can hurt:

One-time Injuries

Some injuries, hopefully, are one-off events, like when you fall or get hit hard while playing a sport.

- **Dislocated elbow.** When one of the bones that forms the elbow gets
Google Elbow Pain

sports injuries...a lot of ways things can go wrong...If anything happens to any of these parts...Wear-and-Tear Injuries...Other injuries occur over time, as you repeat certain actions and put wear and tear on your elbow...You can injure yourself...Often caused by repeating the same motion over and over...swelling in the tendons around your elbow from overuse...

Stress fractures... Arthritis: rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis...Osteochondritis dissecans...Gout...Lupus...Lyme disease
PAIN

Pain often feels like an injury
If something caused a cut, bruising, or something seems out of place, go to the injury page. If not, this is probably the page for you.

Here's a tool that can help figure out what the problem is:

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Common causes of hand and arm pain (click to learn more):

- Arthritis
- Trigger finger
- de Quervain tendinopathy
- Intersection syndrome
- Medial epicondylitis
- Lateral epicondylitis
- Rotator cuff tendinopathy (aka impingement, bursitis)
ENTHESOPATHY

The *enthesis* is where a muscle, tendon, or ligament anchors itself to a bone. An *enthesopathy* is a disease of this attachment point.

Enthesopathies:
- Tend to arise in middle age (35 to 65)
- Last a year +/- 6 months
- Go away and don't return
- In spite of years of work, we can't get it to go away sooner

Common Enthesopathies in the Arm (click to learn more):
- Lateral epicondylitis (aka tennis elbow)
- Medial epicondylitis (aka medial epicondylitis)
- Distal biceps tendinopathy
LATERAL EPICONDYLITIS

**eECRB:** Enthesopathy of the attachment point (origin) of the extensor carpi radialis brevis muscle (one of the three muscles that bends your wrist back)

**Misnomers**
Tennis elbow: It’s not caused by tennis
Epicondylitis: "itis" means inflammation, but this is not an inflammatory condition

**How do I know if I have eECRB?**
Age 35 to 65
Tender to press over a single point on the bone of the outside of the elbow
Pain when lifting something heavy with the palm down
Pain when flexing the wrist with the elbow straight

**Treatment options**
It's safe to keep active
It will go away in 1 to 2 years and leave no trace
Methods

- Truven (commercial claims)
- Arm pains for which people seek care
  - Non-trauma
  - Trauma
Upper Extremity Non-traumatic Pain Diagnoses

- Shoulder pain
- Rotator cuff tendinopathy
- Cervical radiculopathy
- Shoulder stiffness
- Wrist pain
- Shoulder arthritis
- Hand pain
- Lateral epicondylitis
- Hand arthritis
- Trigger finger

Percent
ROTATOR CUFF TENDINOPATHY

How does it feel?
Pain over the front of the shoulder
Worse with reaching behind or overhead

What causes it?
It's a part of normal aging

How is it treated?
There are some simple exercises one can do
Nonspecific treatments such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen
Surgery is considered for large defects
WHAT CAUSES ROTATOR CUFF TENDINOPATHY?

Tendons are the ropes that muscles use to pull a bone. The tendons of the muscles that rotate the shoulder form a cuff around the head of the humerus (the ball of the shoulder joint) -- the "rotator cuff." This cuff of tendons thins and develops a defect or hole over time.

A useful analogy is the greying and thinning of the hair on a man's head.
Exercise 1: External Rotation

Lying on your side with the sore shoulder up.
Put the can or the weight in that hand.
Keep your elbow at your side, against your trunk.
Lift the can all the way up, bring it down, then lift it up again.
Repeat 30 to 50 times then switch to exercise 2.

Exercise 2: Internal Rotation

Turn onto the other side.
Put the can or weight in the hand of the sore shoulder.
Lift the can, bring it down, lift it again.
Repeat 30 to 50 times then switch back to exercise 1.
Self-Care

• I know what’s going on
• I’m as I should be
• I’m not missing out
• Exercises
• Aspirin
Upper Extremity Trauma Diagnoses

- Hand fractures
- Distal radius fractures
- Humerus fractures
- Uncomplicated wounds
- Wrist sprains
- Forearm fractures
- Shoulder dislocations
- Hand sprains
- Clavicle fractures
- Proximal radius fractures
Clinical Prediction Rule

Ottawa Ankle Rules

• Able to walk
• Nontender over the bone
Technology Enhanced Self-Care

• > 90% of non-trauma arm pains can be diagnosed and treated virtually
• With selective x-rays at a convenient place, the same may be true for trauma