

“FIVE SIMPLE EXERCISES FOR FIVE COMMON PROBLEMS”

• Tennis Elbow

Tennis elbow is not a diagnostic term. It is no more specific than ‘back pain’ as a diagnosis. One of the biggest causes of pain in the outside region of the elbow is overstrain of the muscles that run from the wrist up to attach to the upper arm bone (Just above the elbow joint.) It is important to make sure that these muscles are strong. Too often, people try to compensate for weakness in them by using other muscles in their arms.

Tips

In performing this exercise, you must think about sitting up tall on your sitting bones, opening your shoulders wide and resting your forearm on the table.



Place a small 2kg weight in your hand and allow the wrist to drop down over the table. Slowly lift the weight up, bending the wrist backwards and hold momentarily, before lowering the weight back down. Do this exercise with your unaffected wrist and note the number of repetitions you can do. You need to aim to do the same number with your affected wrist, however you must only perform the exercise to the point that you can maintain good technique.

• Anterior Knee Pain

Like ‘tennis elbow’, there are many causes of pain in the anterior aspect of the knee over the kneecap. Two possible sources of pain include the patellar tendon which can be strained with excessive impact activities, and the joint between the kneecap and the thigh bone which may be irritated by poor tracking of the kneecap along the thigh bone. In both cases, thigh muscle strength is absolutely vital in reducing the stress on the point and correcting alignment of the joint surfaces.

You can improve the function of the proprioceptors by practising maintaining your balance and controlling your foot position. Stand on one leg and practise counting slowly to 20.

Tip

When this becomes easier, try the same exercise with your eyes shut. This is much harder, as you no longer have input from your vision to tell you when you are losing your balance, but are relying totally on feedback from your ankle joint.



Clinics at:

Point West, 116 Cromwell Road
Kensington, London.

The Lodge, Parkside Hospital
53 Parkside, Wimbledon, London.

• Achilles Tendinitis

This can be one of the most disabling problems people experience, keeping them off the court or the pitch because of pain and weakness. Often, it is a lack of power in the calf muscles that places increased strain on the tendon connecting the calf muscle to the heel bone. To strengthen this muscle, you must do this exercise on one foot, as you will just compensate for any difference in strength using your unaffected foot. Stand on the affected leg or a step with your heel over the edge, let the heel drop down over the step. Slowly lift the heel up to come onto your toes and then lower slowly. Repeat until the calf muscle starts to feel tired and fatigued.



• Sprained Ankle

A 'sprain' of any joint involves damaging the ligaments that connect the bones together, usually as a result of excessive stretching or twisting of the joint. When you damage the ligaments in your ankle, you also damage some nerve receptors located within the ligaments called *proprioceptors*. These proprioceptors provide the brain with information about what your foot and ankle are doing. You do not need to look at your ankle to know when your foot is pointed or flexed. That is what the proprioceptors are telling your brains. If they are damaged, the delivery of information about your foot and ankle position is delayed, and you are therefore more vulnerable to re-injuring your ankle.



• Hamstring Strain

The hamstring muscles work in such a way that they are contracted and relaxed in a very quick fashion. The muscle fibres must therefore contract and lengthen very rapidly. If you are planning on returning to any sport or activity that involves running or changing direction, it is not enough to simply strengthen the muscle with weights. Specific exercises must be done that work the muscle in this fashion. Lie on your stomach with your knee bent to 90degrees



Gently wobble your lower leg about 20degrees either side of vertical, i.e. bend to 110degrees or straighten to 70 degrees. Do this fairly quickly so that the hamstring muscle gets used to contracting and relaxing. Repeat the exercise until your muscle starts to feel tired or you become vaguely 'aware' of pain. *You must not work this muscle through pain.* Continue practising until you can do an even number on both legs.

Claire Small

Phy St, MMACP, MCSP, SRP
Specialist Musculoskeletal Physiotherapist

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