

Overuse Injuries of the Elbow



Overview

If you are an athlete, or if you work with your arms and hands, your elbows may be at risk for an overuse injury. This is an injury caused by repetitive motions. This type of injury can be a problem for people who play sports such as tennis or baseball. Children also have a higher risk, because their bones are still growing.

Causes

The elbow is a complex joint where three bones meet. When you do the same arm motion again and again, you can put a lot of stress on this joint. You can fracture a bone, or you can damage the cartilage that protects the ends of your bones. You can stretch or tear the ligaments that stabilize the joint. You can injure the tendons that anchor your muscles to the bones. These injuries can compress or irritate the nerves in your elbow. And these injuries can be slow to heal.

Symptoms

If you have an overuse injury, you may have pain and swelling. You may hear sounds such as clicking or popping when you move your elbow. You may feel weakness, numbness or tingling. These symptoms can affect your arm and your hand.

Treatment

Treatment options depend on your specific injury. Often, elbow injuries can be treated with rest, ice, medication and physical therapy. You may benefit from a brace or a cast. Your healthcare provider can create a plan that is right for you.

