

Tennis/ golfer's elbow surgery

Information for patients

This information sheet answers some of the questions you may have about having **tennis or golfer's elbow surgery**. It explains the risks and the benefits of the procedure and what you can expect when you come to hospital. If you have any other questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to the doctors or nurses caring for you.

What is tennis/golfer's elbow surgery?

It involves removing abnormal (painful) tissue and reattaching healthy muscle back to bone. This is mostly done through an open wound but occasionally we do an arthroscopy.

You usually have this operation under general anaesthetic, so you will be asleep. You usually have it as day case, so you should be able to go home the same day as your operation. If you have other medical problems as well, you may be admitted as an inpatient and stay longer in hospital.

Why do I need surgery?

Tennis elbow is a painful condition caused by overuse. Playing racquet sports, including tennis, can cause it, but other sports and activities can also put you at risk.

The tendons that join your forearm muscles on the outside of your elbow become inflamed. The muscles and tendons become damaged from overuse – repeating the same actions again and again. This leads to pain and tenderness on the outside of your elbow.

Golfer's elbow is a similar condition that affects the inside of your elbow.

What are the benefits?

- Between 80% and 90% of patients have excellent relief from the pain.
- You can often return to daily activities without pain within three to six weeks, although it can take several months to start playing sports or making heavy use of your arm.

What are the risks?

This procedure is generally considered safe but there are risks with all surgery. The most common are:

- infection
- nerve and blood vessel damage
- it could take you some time to recover
- loss of strength in your elbow
- loss of flexibility in your elbow
- you may need more surgery.

Your anaesthetist will discuss with you the most appropriate type of anaesthetic for this operation and any associated risks.

Are there any alternatives?

The majority of cases of tennis/golfer's elbow get better without surgery. We usually offer you surgery only if 6 to 12 months of treatments that do not involve surgery fail to help and pain continues to prevent activity.

These treatments include:

- rest and changing your activities together with medication, possibly non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs which you take by mouth. You will also have physiotherapy, which involves stretching and strengthening the affected muscles and tendons. These are considered the main treatments for this condition and are usually the first things we recommend. You may also need to use straps and braces on your elbow.
- steroid injections can also be useful. Sometimes you may need more than one injection.

Consent

We must by law obtain your written consent to any operation and some other procedures beforehand. Staff will explain the risks, benefits and alternatives before they ask you to sign a consent form. If you are unsure of any aspect of the treatment proposed, please do not hesitate to speak with a senior member of the staff again.

Who can I contact with queries and concerns?

Please contact a member of your consultant's team for more information.

Do I need to prepare for surgery?

Before your operation you will have a pre-assessment appointment with one of our nurses. They will carry out some screening tests which may include blood tests, MRSA swabs and an electrocardiogram (ECG). You will be asked questions about your health, medical history and your home circumstances. Please bring with you details of any medication you are currently taking.

You will be given information such as:

- when to stop eating and drinking in the hours before your operation
- whether you should stop taking your usual medications before going into hospital
- what to bring with you into hospital

What happens during surgery?

The surgeon will make a small cut, about 4-5cm long, in the skin of your elbow. For tennis elbow, they make the cut on the outside of your elbow, and for golfer's elbow they make it on the inside. The wound is usually closed with absorbable sutures. If you have an arthroscopy, you may have stitches (sutures) that need to be removed two weeks after surgery.

How long does surgery take?

It takes about 45 minutes, but expect to spend either the whole morning or afternoon at the hospital.

What happens after surgery?

As you had a general anaesthetic you will go back to the ward for at least an hour because you will feel drowsy and need time to recover. Sometimes it can take longer to feel alert enough to go home.

You will also need a relative, friend or carer who can escort you home and stay with you for the first 24 hours after your procedure. Please let them know that they may have to wait for you if you are not ready to leave.

It is important to take painkillers after your surgery, to allow you to move your elbow comfortably. You need to keep your wound clean and dry for about two weeks, while it heals. We will make an appointment for you to have your stitches removed after about two weeks. Once the wound has healed, you can start your physiotherapy stretching exercises.

Valuables

Where possible, please do not bring anything of value into hospital with you as we do not have the facilities to lock your valuables away. Our staff will treat your possessions with care, but the Trust cannot accept liability for the loss of personal items.

Sharing your information

We have teamed up with Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals in a partnership known as King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas'. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.

Care provided by students

We provide clinical training where our students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. The PALS office is located on the ground floor of the Hambleton Wing, near the main entrance on Bessemer Road - staff will be happy to direct you.

Tel: 020 3299 3601
Fax: 020 3299 3626
Email: kch-tr.PALS@nhs.net

You can also contact us by using our online form at www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact PALS on 020 3299 1844.

www.kch.nhs.uk
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For more information, visit www.kingshealthpartners.org 