



PERSONAL MESSAGE

the Challenge of Treating Tendinitis

by Bruce Snell, PT

IN THIS ISSUE



- 2 TENDINITIS**
Risk factors and what to do.
- 3 TIPS & TRICKS**
Exercises to minimize problems with tendinitis.
- 4 FAQ**
Most frequently asked questions about tendinitis.
- TENDINITIS—SIMPLE TEST**
What is the state of your tendons?
- 5 FEATURED PHYSICAL THERAPIST**
If you have tendinitis, our featured therapist can help you.
- SUCCESSSES**
- 6 CONTACT US**

Physical Therapists need a variety of approaches when it comes to treating tendinitis problems because tendinitis can occur in many different parts of the body (shoulder, elbow, wrist, knee, and ankle) and each area may respond differently to treatment.

The overall approach is to quickly reduce the pain and swelling, allow the tissue to heal and then restore strength, motion and function. Let's take a look at how this is done from a physical therapy viewpoint.

First, the motion or activity that is causing the problem needs to be identified and isolated. This is accomplished by thoroughly evaluating the person and may occasionally require a trip to the work site if that is where the problem is occurring. Once the culprit is found, a Physical Therapist can help the person avoid the stressful movements by reorganizing how the activity is set up or finding movement alternatives. In many cases, the activity may need to be avoided all together until the tissue has completely recovered.

The Physical Therapist aids the reduction of pain and swelling with the use of various treatment aides such as ultrasound or electrical stimulation, which may be used in combination with a topical anti-inflammatory medication prescribed by your doctor. Gentle manual therapy techniques, specific types of soft tissue massage and the utilization of ice can also assist in the healing process.



Bruce Snell—Owner, NW Sports Physical Therapy, Inc.

Next, the tendon may need to rest. The Physical Therapist can show you how to protect the area with a supportive device, taping or wrapping. This may help reduce the isolated stress on the area and allow the inflamed tendons to recover while still being able to use it. The therapist can also be helpful in finding an appropriate resting position to aid in healing.

Once healing has started, it is vital that the muscles and tendons in the involved area regain their motion, strength and endurance. The Physical Therapist is the key person to guide this part of the process. The exercises need to be sequenced and coordinated correctly for maximum benefit.

The activities also need to be correctly applied in order to allow maximum function with minimum stress on the injured body part or tendon.

Staying healthy takes both training and education. Your Physical Therapist is an expert in both and can teach you how to avoid further injury into the future. It's called "Prevention" and we would be happy to help you with this!

RISK FACTORS that cause TENDINITIS and what to do about them

by Gaynor Hale,
Physical Therapist



“If the inflammation goes unchecked the situation can deteriorate to the point where surgery is needed to remove calcium deposits that can develop in the tendon, to remove the inflamed tissue around the tendon or to stabilize the joint.”

Atendon is a soft tissue that connects a muscle to bone. Because the muscles are constantly putting strain on the tendon as they move tendons can become inflamed or irritated. This inflammation and irritation to the tendon is called tendinitis. Any activity, injury or ailment which causes swelling and inflammation of the tendon can also put pressure on nerves that are in close proximity to the tendon, causing further pain.

The most common symptoms of tendinitis are:

1. Pain and tenderness along the tendon, sometimes worse at night.
2. Pain that is worse with movement or activity.
3. Swelling and sometimes redness over the tendon area.
4. Stiffness in the joint.
5. A rubbing or snapping “heard” or felt with motion.

The most common causes of tendinitis are:

1. Overuse: when activity requires a high level of repetition, tendons can be injured or irritated leading to tendinitis. Awkward positioning of a body part, such as working with your arm over your head for long periods, typing in a position with head and shoulders hunched over, etc.
2. Poor conditioning: when tendons are being used at a level of activity they are not accustomed to.

3. Age: tendons can lose their elasticity and ability with age. They don't glide as smoothly as they used to. This is possibly due to a change in the blood vessels that supply nutrition to the tendons. With these changes and the changes in a person's posture with age, tendons can become irritated and inflamed more easily.

4. Deficiency in Vitamin B6: There is some evidence that a deficiency in vitamin B6 can also contribute to tendinitis.



Tendinitis can occur in numerous places in the body because there are so many tendons connecting all the muscles to the bones. Following are the more common sites where tendinitis occurs:

1. This commonly involves the rotator cuff tendons or the biceps tendon. These forms of tendinitis are sometimes referred to as “swimmer's shoulder” or “pitcher's shoulder.”

2. Elbow: when the inside of the elbow is involved it is called “golfer's elbow.” When it is the outside area of the elbow, it is called “tennis elbow.”

3. Knee: this is commonly called “jumper's knee” with pain and inflammation around the knee cap.

4. Foot: achilles tendinitis involves the heel of the foot and the tendon attaching to it.

5. Wrists: when affected with tendinitis, it is called carpal tunnel syndrome and involves the tendons going into the wrist.

The goal of treatment is to relieve the pain

and decrease the inflammation in the tendon. Treatment would involve resting the affected area, usually by simply stopping the activity that caused the irritation. For a sport or recreational activity it would be fairly simple. If the activity in question involves work tasks, it becomes more complicated. A worker who has developed tendinitis from repetitive work activities frequently cannot return to those same tasks. In some cases resting the involved area might require the use of braces or splints. These are sometimes worn only at night and sometimes during activity.

The use of ice or heat can be therapeutic as can the use of anti-inflammatory medications such as ibuprofen or aspirin. The latter

should be determined by the doctor. In some cases steroid injections, such as cortisone, may be used to break up calcium deposits that can develop in the tendon in severe cases or to give relief to severe inflammation.

If the inflammation goes unchecked by continuing the harmful activity or not receiving effective treatment, the situation can deteriorate to the point where surgery is needed to remove calcium deposits that can develop in the tendon, to remove the inflamed tissue around the tendon or to stabilize the joint.

Physical Therapy is needed to restore mobility and function of the tendon and joint that is involved. Stretching and strengthening exercises are vital

in restoring normal function, aiding the healing process and preventing further injury. Additionally, the use of heat/cold, ultrasound and other modalities can help to decrease the pain and break up the calcium deposits. In some cases the cortisone can be administered through the skin right over the tendon using ultrasound or electrical stimulation. Deep friction massage can also aid the healing and improve flexibility.

Prevention is a key factor. This is accomplished by 1.) avoiding repetitive motion and overuse, 2) doing warm-up exercises before vigorous activity and 3) properly conditioning to keep muscles strong and flexible and 4) wearing appropriate shoes.

Tips and Tricks

AID AND TIPS FOR EARLY ONSET OF TENDINITIS

This is called the R.I.C.E. treatment:



1. Rest. Stop whatever activity you are doing that is irritating the tendon. If it is in the knee or foot you may need to sit or lay down to rest it. For wrists, elbows or shoulders a sling may be helpful.

2. Ice. Apply ice or cold cloth over the inflamed area. Apply for 15 to 20 minutes at a time, every few hours for the first 24 to 48 hours. This will reduce the swelling and tenderness.



3. Compress. Apply some compression to the area with an ace bandage to reduce swelling. There are tennis elbow straps to apply pressure to the elbow.



4. Elevate. Elevate the part that is effected by placing it on pillows or a footstool. To be effective it should be elevated above the heart.



FAQ

Can tendinitis cause permanent damage?

Yes, if it goes untreated or you continue to do the activity that is causing the damage, calcium deposits can develop or the tendon can rupture.

What can I do to keep the tendinitis from coming back?

Do warm-up exercises before any vigorous activity and keep yourself fit and flexible.

I have tennis elbow, how long do I have to stay away from playing tennis?

Until the pain and inflammation are gone and you have appropriately rehabilitated the strength and

flexibility in your arm. Don't forget to go back at it gradually.

The ice is not very comfortable on my elbow, what does it do for my tendinitis?

It prevents swelling and reduces the pain.

What is a "calcific tendinitis?"

This means that there are calcium deposits in the tendon.

How is it treated?

Cortisone injections might break up the deposits or it might take surgery to remove them.

Do you need to see a Physical Therapist for your tendinitis? Take this simple test...

YES	NO	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	My heel hurts every time I walk for any distance.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	My elbow used to hurt only when I played tennis. Now it aches for a couple of hours after that too.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I wake up in the night with shoulder pain after I have been painting ceilings or working overhead.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I work on a computer all day and lately my wrists have been aching when I go home.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	When I raise my arm it hurts and it feels like something is rubbing.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	When I have to lift heavy objects my elbow hurts.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am getting tingling in my hands and my wrists feel swollen.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I have to do a lot of physical activity at work and I don't know what to do to get in shape to do it safely.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	My elbow hurts when I carry things.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am on the local swim team and noticed that my right shoulder is hurting after practice.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I lay carpets for a living and lately my knees have been hurting around my knee caps.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	My elbow feels stiff when I play golf and lately it has started to ache on the inside of my elbow.

Results:

Less than 3 Yes:

You're doing fine. Exercising may help keep your tendinitis in check.

Between 3 and 6 Yes:

Physical Therapy is an option for you.

More than 6 Yes:

We would advise you to see a doctor to get a better diagnosis. PT is definitely an option.



Featured Physical Therapist

Gretchen Hull, PT, OCS



Gretchen Hull has worked for NW Sports Physical Therapy, Inc., for nearly 20 years. She has worked in the Gig Harbor office since 1990. She graduated from the University of Montana with a degree in Physical Therapy in 1984. She is a board certified orthopedic clinical specialist in Physical Therapy.

Gretchen enjoys working in all aspects of orthopedic physical therapy. She has completed extensive course work including; manual therapy techniques for the cervical, thoracic and lumbar spine, treatment for movement disorder of the upper extremity, Mckenzie method of mechanical diagnosis and treatment of the spine and several courses covering the injuries of the shoulder, knee, foot and ankle. She has a special interest in the lumbar and sacroiliac joints.

In her spare time, Gretchen enjoys running, skiing, hiking and spending time with her family.

SUCCESSES

What patients are saying . . .

“NW Sports Physical Therapy, Inc., was a pleasant and refreshing reminder of what the word “professional” defines. Not only did I receive excellent PT for my lower back condition, I am please to know and report that customer service still exists in the 21st century. All of the staff and health care providers were courteous, positive, caring and fun. They listen and they solve whatever obstacles exist and make you feel we are all on the same team!”
..... Paul



“I have really enjoyed the experience of hand therapy. I’ve learned so much about how to take care of myself to minimize any further damage. Its



even into my lower leg. My therapist took the time to address my problems, and then implemented a strategy to work to get my back into shape again. With the varied exercises both at the office and at home, in a very short period of time I felt back to normal and am currently experiencing no pain at all. A very profound thank you to my therapist for all her hard work and positive attitude. I now feel great!” ... Jeff

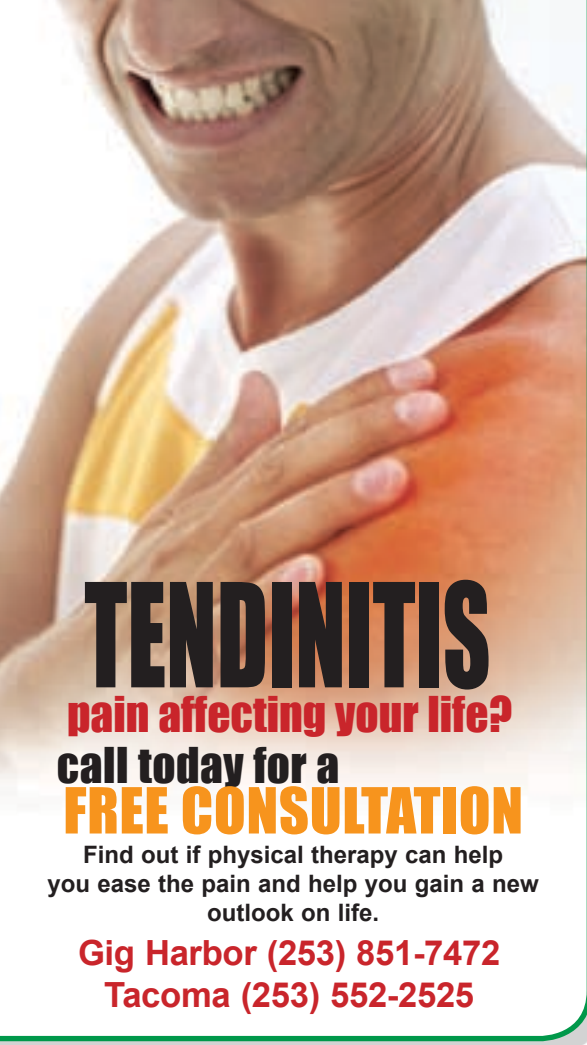


“The treatments I received were very educational and really helped correct my incontinence. My muscles are stronger and I have learned how to use them to my advantage.” Jane

amazing how such simple things, (stretching, icing, massage) can make such a huge difference.” ... Terry

“Prior to seeing my therapist, I was having tremendous lower back pain,

the team effort your staff puts into the rehab process. In my case, my therapists did an excellent job of working the tendonitis out of my ankle, while keeping me entertained in the process.” ... Brian



NW SPORTS
PHYSICAL THERAPY, INC.

Caring about **you** is our business at **NW Sports Physical Therapy, Inc.** Our Tacoma and Gig Harbor clinics provide physical therapy for a wide variety of conditions. We use a number of methods to decrease your pain, improve your mobility and make you stronger, healthier and happier.

The feeling you get here is one of caring, helpful staff in a friendly environment, assisting you in your desire to become more active or return to work or play.

NW Sports Physical Therapy, Inc. also has two other clinics which focus

on specific areas of concern. First, **NW Hand Therapy** specializes in the treatment of hand, wrist, elbow and shoulder problems. We have five hand therapists, two of which are Certified Hand Therapists to serve your needs.

Second is our newest specialty area, **NW Women's Physical Therapy.** This clinic is dedicated exclusively to women's health and wellness. We have the ability to care for issues specific to women, in a warm, friendly environment. Our experienced therapists treat issues such as bladder and bowel incontinence, osteoporosis, pelvic floor pain and fibromyalgia.

TENDINITIS

pain affecting your life?
call today for a
FREE CONSULTATION

Find out if physical therapy can help you ease the pain and help you gain a new outlook on life.

Gig Harbor (253) 851-7472
Tacoma (253) 552-2525

WE CARE ABOUT YOU!

Call us today for a **FREE** consultation at

NW Sports Physical Therapy, Inc
Gig Harbor (253) 851-7472
Tacoma (253) 552-2525

NW Hand Therapy
Gig Harbor (253) 851-7472
Tacoma (253) 428-8292

NW Women's Physical Therapy
(253) 851-7277
www.nwsportspt.com

of Treating Tendinitis the Challenge

INSIDE:

NW Sports Physical Therapy
4411 Pt. Fosdick Dr., Suite 101
Gig Harbor, WA 98335

NW Sports Physical Therapy
1112 6th Avenue, Suite 301
Tacoma, WA

NW Hand Therapy
1624 South "I" Street, Suite 301
Tacoma, WA

NW Women's Physical Therapy
6712 Kimball Drive, Suite 101
Gig Harbor, WA

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