

# Overuse injuries in tennis



The shoulder and elbow are common overuse injuries in tennis players that result in much frustration and pain.

The shoulder and elbow joints are subject to repetitive bouts of force transmitted from the ball/racquet contact. With added top spin the position of the shoulder and elbow are at different positions that are increasingly susceptible to injury.

## The Elbow

The common term 'tennis elbow' has been used to describe pain felt on the lateral (outside) area of the elbow. This term is a misnomer, as the elbow often has tenderness on the medial (inside) area of the elbow as well (see Diagram 1). It is possible that an impingement (jamming up) may develop in the medial and lateral elbow joint as the elbow rotates into pronation (palm facing downwards) during serving and forehand topspin. Local supporting tissues usually are inflamed with microtrauma from the repetitive overload.

## The Shoulder

Similarly, the shoulder may be subject to impingement (jamming up) at the antero-lateral (front) aspect (see Diagram 1). This occurs during serving and forehand strokes that involve topspin.

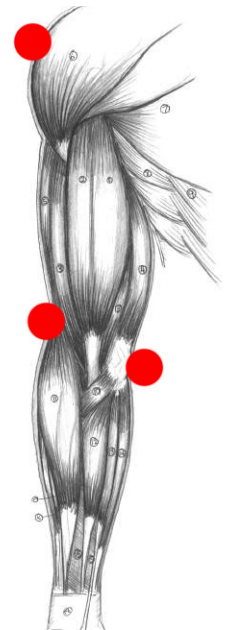
As topspin forehand and serving actions cause repeated insult to the elbow and shoulder complex, inadequate recovery results in a debilitating injury that often takes some weeks to fully recover.

## Contributing Factors in Tennis

1. Poor technique and biomechanics – late contact
2. Top spin
3. Poor shoulder posture
4. Racquet-string tension, size, grip size/type
5. Muscle imbalances in the elbow and shoulder
6. Fatigue
7. Inadequate recovery
8. Old/flat/worn tennis balls
9. Excessive elbow pronation and shoulder internal rotation
10. Age and previous elbow/shoulder injuries.

## Conservative Management

1. Change faulty technique and biomechanics – coaching
2. Adequate recovery and stretching
3. Anti-inflammatory medications
4. Specific elbow and shoulder strengthening and taping to unload the elbow/shoulder complex
5. Acupuncture
6. Tennis specific screening to detect these problems that is available at Wakefield Sports Clinic.



## Wakefield Sports Clinic

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