



Inflamed or swollen tendon (tendinopathy and tenosynovitis): aftercare advice

Information for patients from the Emergency Department

Please speak to a healthcare professional before following the advice below

You have come to the Emergency Department or Urgent Treatment Centre with a swollen or inflamed tendon. The following outlines the symptoms you may have, plus possible treatment options. If you have any further questions, please speak to the member of staff treating you.

What is tendinopathy and tenosynovitis?

Tendinopathy and tenosynovitis are types of tendon injury.

- Tendinopathy is a tendon injury.
- While tenosynovitis is inflammation (swelling) of the sheath of tissue around a tendon.

A tendon is a fibrous cord that attaches muscle to bone. The inflammation usually happens where a tendon passes over a joint, for example at the wrist, ankle, elbow, or shoulder.

What are the symptoms?

- The joint is painful to move.
- There is sometimes swelling or even a lump in the affected part of the tendon.
- A grating / creaking sound may be heard when you move it. This is where the tendon moves within the inflamed sheath; you cannot feel this.

Some types of tendinopathy and tenosynovitis cause very characteristic symptoms and have their own name. For example:

- **De Quervain's tenosynovitis** is a common condition that affects the tendons that are used to straighten your thumb. The typical symptom is pain over your wrist at the base of your thumb, that is

made worse by activity and helped by rest.

- **Trigger finger** usually affects your ring finger and stops your finger from straightening fully.
- **Tennis elbow (lateral epicondylitis)** is a condition where you have pain on the outer side of your elbow. It is usually due to overuse of your forearm muscles.
- **Golfer's elbow (medial epicondylitis)** is similar to tennis elbow but the pain is felt on the inner side of your elbow.
- **Achilles tendinopathy** affects the large tendon just behind and above the heel.
- **Rotator cuff tendinopathy.** Your rotator cuff is a group of four muscles that help to lift and rotate your shoulder. The tendons from these muscles can sometimes become irritated due to overuse.

What treatment options are there?

- **Rest your affected joint with or without a support.** Where your elbow or shoulder is affected this support may be in the form of a sling, whereas a problem with your wrist may be more comfortably supported in a splint. Please remove the sling and / or splint at regular intervals during the day and especially at night to help circulation.
- **Painkillers** (such as paracetamol or ibuprofen) can be taken three to four times a day (check the advice that comes with the tablets).
- You can use **ice (or a cold flannel)** to ease the pain, by wrapping crushed ice in a damp towel and placing it over your injury. Leave the ice in place for 10 to 15 minutes, then remove. Do this every two to four hours during the day, for two to three days.
CAUTION: ice can cause burns, so do not put it directly on your skin, always use a towel. Protect sensitive skin with baby oil.

What should I do if it does not get better?

Complete recovery can take weeks to several months. However, if it does not get any better after seven to 10 days, please go to your GP for further advice.

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients.

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 783145, or email ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net

Patients should not bring large sums of money or valuables into hospital. Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property has been handed into Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals website (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/information-for-patients/patient-information/>).

Reference number: Web 012

First published:
April 2018

Last reviewed:
June 2023

Next review date:
October 2026

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