

TRICEPS TENDINITIS



■ ■ ■ Description

Triceps tendinitis is characterized by inflammation and pain at the triceps tendon (the tendon of the upper arm behind the elbow). This structure is the tendon attachment of the triceps (back of the arm) muscle to the elbow and is important in straightening the elbow and keeping the elbow from bending too quickly. This is usually a grade 1 or 2 strain of the tendon and tends to occur due to overuse. A *grade 1 strain* is a mild strain. There is a slight pull without obvious tearing (it is microscopic tendon tearing). There is no loss of strength, and the tendon is the correct length. A *grade 2 strain* is a moderate strain. There is tearing of fibers within the substance of the tendon or where the tendon meets the bone or muscle. The length of the whole muscle-tendon-bone unit is increased, and there is usually decreased strength. A *grade 3 strain* is a complete rupture of the tendon.

■ ■ ■ Common Signs and Symptoms

- Pain, tenderness, swelling, warmth, or redness over the triceps tendon, above the back of the elbow
- Pain and loss of strength (occasionally) with forcefully straightening the elbow (bench press or push-ups)
- Crepitation (a crackling sound) when the tendon is moved or touched

■ ■ ■ Causes

- Strain from sudden increase in amount or intensity of activity or overuse of the triceps muscles and tendon
- Direct blow, laceration (cut), or injury to the triceps tendon

■ ■ ■ Risk Increases With

- Sports that require sudden, explosive triceps contraction (off-road mountain biking or motorcycle riding and jumping)
- Weightlifting, particularly bench press and push-ups
- Poor physical conditioning (strength and flexibility, weak triceps)
- Steroid use

■ ■ ■ Preventive Measures

- Appropriately warm up and stretch before practice or competition.
- Allow time for adequate rest and recovery between practices and competition.
- Maintain appropriate conditioning:
 - Elbow flexibility
 - Muscle strength and endurance
 - Cardiovascular fitness
- To help prevent recurrence, taping, protective strapping or bracing, or an adhesive bandage may be recommended for several weeks after healing is complete.

■ ■ ■ Expected Outcome

This condition is usually curable within 6 weeks if treated appropriately with conservative treatment and resting of the affected area.

■ ■ ■ Possible Complications

- Prolonged healing time if not appropriately treated or if not given adequate time to heal
- Recurrence of symptoms if activity is resumed too soon, with overuse, with a direct blow, or when using poor technique.
- Untreated, tendon rupture requiring surgery

■ ■ ■ General Treatment Considerations

Initial treatment consists of medication and ice to relieve the pain, stretching and strengthening exercises of the triceps and biceps muscles, and modification of the activity that initially caused the problem. These all can be carried out at home, although referral to a physical therapist or athletic trainer for further evaluation and treatment may be helpful. Rarely, an elbow cast may be recommended for 10 to 14 days to immobilize the tendon and allow the inflammation to settle down. Occasionally an elbow brace or sleeve may be prescribed. Surgery to remove the inflamed tendon lining or degenerated tendon tissue is rarely necessary and is considered only after at least 6 months of adequate rehabilitation and rest.

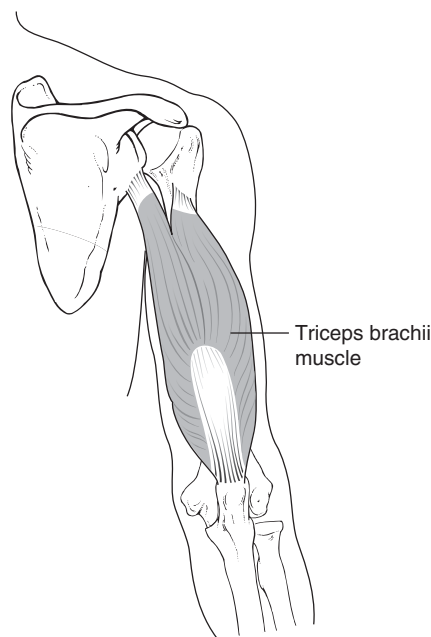


Figure 1

■ ■ ■ Medication

- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications, such as aspirin and ibuprofen (do not take within 7 days before surgery), or other minor pain relievers, such as acetaminophen, are often recommended. Take these as directed by your physician. Contact your physician immediately if any bleeding, stomach upset, or signs of an allergic reaction occur.
- Pain relievers may be prescribed as necessary by your physician. Use only as directed.
- Cortisone injections are not given. Cortisone injections may weaken tendons, so it is better to give the condition more time to heal than to use them.

■ ■ ■ Heat and Cold

- Cold is used to relieve pain and reduce inflammation for acute and chronic cases. Cold should be applied for 10 to 15 minutes every 2 to 3 hours for inflammation and pain and immediately after any activity that aggravates your symptoms. Use ice packs or an ice massage.

- Heat may be used before performing stretching and strengthening activities prescribed by your physician, physical therapist, or athletic trainer. Use a heat pack or a warm soak.

■ ■ ■ Notify Our Office If

- Symptoms get worse or do not improve in 2 weeks despite treatment
- You develop a triceps tendon rupture (an inability to straighten the elbow under your own power)
- New, unexplained symptoms develop (drugs used in treatment may produce side effects)

EXERCISES

> RANGE OF MOTION AND STRETCHING EXERCISES • Triceps Tendinitis

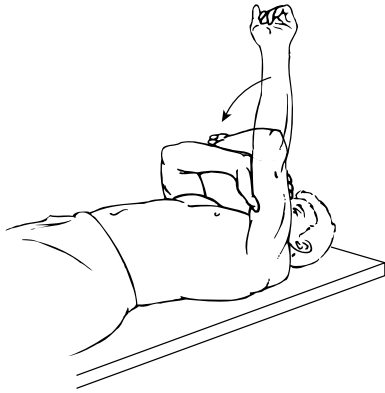
These are some of the *initial* exercises you may start your rehabilitation program with until you see your physician, physical therapist, or athletic trainer again or until your symptoms are resolved. Please remember:

- Flexible tissue is more tolerant of the stresses placed on it during activities.
- Each stretch should be held for 20 to 30 seconds.
- A *gentle* stretching sensation should be felt.



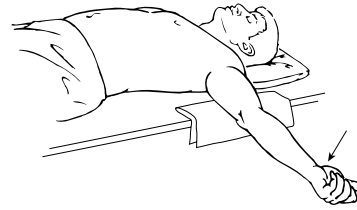
RANGE OF MOTION • Flexion

1. Bend your _____ elbow as far as you can actively.
2. Try to bend it a little farther with the other hand as shown until you feel a gentle stretch.
3. Hold this position for _____ seconds and then *slowly* return to the starting position.
4. Repeat exercise _____ times, _____ times per day.



RANGE OF MOTION • Flexion

1. Lie on your back with your _____ arm straight up in the air. Support your arm with the other hand as shown.
2. Let the gravity weight of your hand, wrist, and lower arm bend your elbow until you feel a slight stretch.
3. You may hold a small weight in your hand or wear a weight around your wrist (_____ lbs.) if approved by your physician, physical therapist, or athletic trainer to help stretch farther.
4. Hold this position for _____ seconds and then *slowly* return to the starting position.
5. Repeat exercise _____ times, _____ times per day.



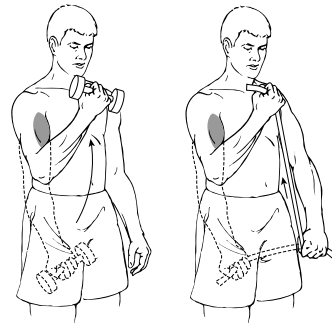
RANGE OF MOTION • Extension

1. Lie on your back and rest your elbow off the edge of the bed as shown. You may also sit at a table with the upper arm supported in a similar manner.
2. Let the gravity weight of your hand, wrist, and lower arm straighten your elbow until you feel a slight stretch.
3. You may hold a small weight in your hand or wear a weight around your wrist (_____ lbs.) if approved by your physician, physical therapist, or athletic trainer to help stretch farther.
4. Hold this position for _____ seconds and then *slowly* return to the starting position.
5. Repeat exercise _____ times, _____ times per day.

> STRENGTHENING EXERCISES • Triceps Tendinitis

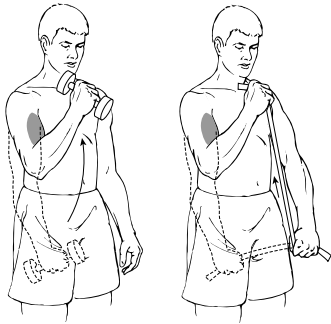
These are some of the *initial* exercises you may start your rehabilitation program with until you see your physician, physical therapist, or athletic trainer again or until your symptoms are resolved. Please remember:

- Strong muscles with good endurance tolerate stress better.
- Do the exercises as *initially* prescribed by your physician, physical therapist, or athletic trainer. Progress slowly with each exercise, gradually increasing the number of repetitions and weight used under their guidance.



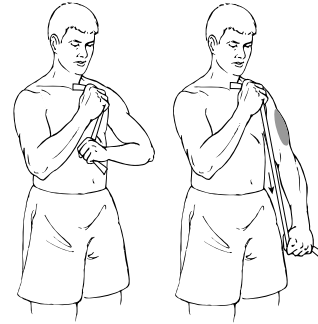
STRENGTH • Elbow Flexion

1. Stand with your arm straight and your *palm* facing forward.
2. Bend the elbow as shown using a _____ pound weight or rubber band/tubing as shown.
3. Hold this position for _____ seconds and then *slowly* return to the starting position.
4. Repeat exercise _____ times, _____ times per day.



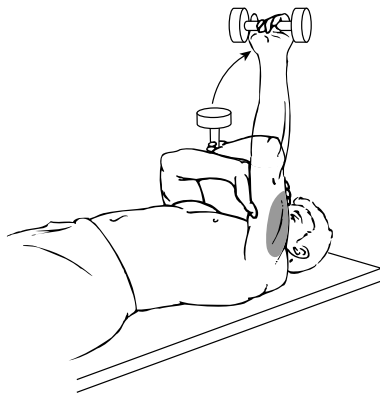
STRENGTH • Elbow Flexion

1. Stand with your arm straight and your *thumb* facing forward.
2. Bend the elbow as shown using a _____ pound weight or rubber band/tubing as shown.
3. Hold this position for _____ seconds and then *slowly* return to the starting position.
4. Repeat exercise _____ times, _____ times per day.



STRENGTH • Elbow Extension

1. Hold the rubber band/tubing with your _____ hand on the bottom as shown.
2. Straighten out your elbow, stretching the rubber band/tubing for resistance.
3. Hold this position for _____ seconds and then *slowly* return to the starting position.
4. Repeat exercise _____ times, _____ times per day.



STRENGTH • Elbow Extension

1. Lie on your back with your _____ elbow bent and pointing directly at the ceiling as shown. (You may also do this exercise standing with the arm pointed overhead.)
2. Hold a _____ pound weight in your hand.
3. Straighten the elbow.
4. Hold this position for _____ seconds and then *slowly* return to the starting position.
5. Repeat exercise _____ times, _____ times per day.



STRENGTH • Elbow Extension, Isometric

1. With your involved/injured arm on top and the palm of your hand facing you, assume the position shown.
2. While resisting with the bottom hand, try to straighten the elbow of your involved/injured arm.
3. Do not allow your elbow to move.
4. Hold this position for _____ seconds, then relax.
5. Repeat exercise _____ times, _____ times per day.

Notes:

(Up to 4400 characters only)

Notes and suggestions