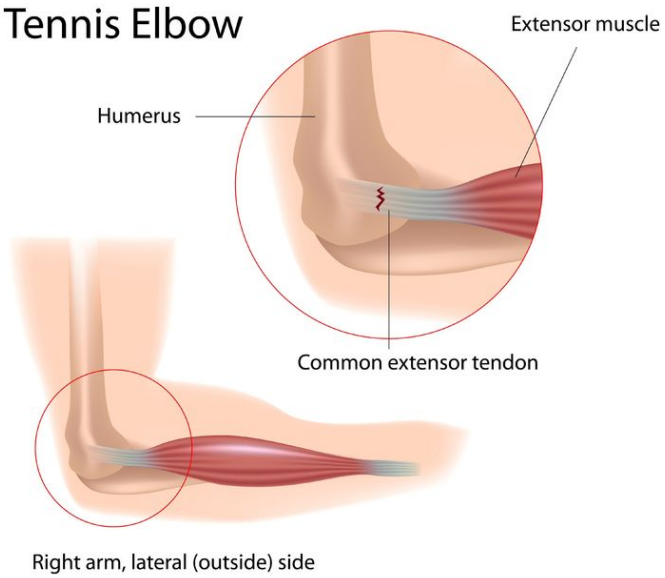
Lateral Epicondylitis (Tennis Elbow)

Lateral epicondylitis is commonly known as tennis elbow but is not limited to tennis players. Many other repetitive activities can lead to tennis elbow: painting, using hand tools, using a blow dryer, pruning shrubs or other athletic activities that repeatedly stress the same forearm muscles. Overuse of the muscles and tendons of the forearm are the most common reason people develop tennis elbow. With any injury, the body undergoes an inflammatory response and specialized inflammatory cells make their way to the injured tissues to help them heal. Conditions that involve inflammation are indicated by *-itis* on the end of the word. For example, inflammation in a tendon is called *tendonitis*. Frequently, the tendonitis leads to tissue degeneration and is called *tendonosis*. Instead of inflammatory cells, the body produces a type of cells called *fibroblasts*. When this happens, the collagen loses its strength, becomes fragile and can be easily injured. Each time the collagen breaks down, the body responds by forming scar tissue in the tendon. Researchers think the forearm tendon develops small tears with too much activity and as the tears try to heal, re-injury occurs, making the area weak and painful.



Symptoms of tennis elbow are tenderness and pain at the lateral aspect of the elbow, which may spread down the forearm. The forearm muscles may feel tight and sore. The pain is typically worse when bending the wrist backward, gripping daily items, shaking hands, or simply reaching for a carton of milk.

Treatment in physical therapy is quite effective when diagnosed with lateral epicondylitis. Care will start with a detailed medical history and physical assessment. Once your diagnostic examination is complete, Lakeshore Physical Therapy has treatment options that will help speed recovery, so that you can more quickly return to pain free activities.

Astym is a therapy treatment that regenerates healthy soft tissues (muscles, tendons, etc.), and eliminates or reduces unwanted scar tissue that may be causing pain or movement restrictions. The treatment is highly effective and even works when other approaches routinely fail. It works to address the underlying cause of soft tissue problems, rather than just trying to temporarily relieve symptoms. There are a variety of stretching and strengthening exercises that are given to address the weakened area. Often an elbow support, various modalities or ice can be an effective adjunct to the rehabilitation process.