

Little League Elbow (Medial Epicondylitis)

What is it?

Little League elbow is pain in the elbow joint due to repetitive throwing. Throwing too many pitches or throwing the wrong type of pitches (i.e., curves or sliders) puts great stress on a young pitcher's elbow ligaments. Specific throwing events that may lead to Little League elbow include:

- * Throwing too hard too often
- * Increasing the number of pitches you throw per week too quickly
- * Throwing too many curves or sliders at a young age
- * Changing to a league where the pitcher's mound is farther away from home plate or the mound is elevated

Symptoms:

- * Pain around the bony knob on the inner side of the elbow
- * Swelling (possibly)
- * Pain when throwing overhand
- * Sometimes, pain with gripping or carrying heavy objects

Prevention

- * Always warm up before pitching with light aerobic exercise, such as jogging or jumping jacks.
- * Always stretch your muscles slowly and gently before pitching.
- * Always follow the pitching rules of your baseball league and do not play in two leagues at the same time.
- * Learn and practice the mechanics of good pitching technique.
- * Do not throw curve balls and sliders until high school when the growth plate in your elbow is fused with the bone.

Pitch Counts

<u>Age</u>	<u>Max. Pitches Per Game</u>	<u>Max. Games Per Week</u>
8-10	52	2
11-12	68	2
13-14	76	2
15-16	91	2
17-18	106	2

Age Recommendation For Learning Various Pitches

<u>Pitch</u>	<u>Age</u>
Fastball	8 - 10
Change-Up	10 - 13
Curve ball	14 - 16
Knuckle ball	15 - 18
Slider	16 - 18
Fork ball	16 - 18
Screw ball	17 - 19

Treatment

Treatment and recovery depend on the severity of the injury. Recovery time ranges from 6 weeks to 3 months.

Treatment includes:

Rest – Do not pitch or do any activities that cause elbow pain. Do not play sports, especially throwing sports, until the pain is gone.

Cold – Apply ice or a cold pack to the outside of the elbow for 15-20 minutes, 4 times a day, for several days. Wrap the ice or cold pack in a towel. Do not apply the ice directly to your skin.

Medication – Medications such as aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), naproxen (Naprosyn), or acetaminophen (Tylenol) should be taken only under a doctor's orders. These may help relieve pain but could also mask symptoms. Pain in the elbow of a young pitcher must be checked out by a doctor, preferably an orthopaedic surgeon.

Physical Therapy – After the pain is gone, begin strengthening exercises for your arm muscles and range of motion exercises for your elbow as recommended by a health care professional.

Gradual Return to Pitching – Begin throwing motions and gradually progress to pitching as recommended by a health care professional. Your baseball coach must be aware of the treatment plan.

Little League Elbow Exercises

Wrist Flexor Stretch

Keeping elbow straight, grasp hand and slowly bend wrist back until stretch is felt. Hold 10-15 seconds. Relax. Repeat 10 times per set. Do 1 set per session. Do 1-3 sessions per day.

Wrist Extensor Stretch

Keeping elbow straight, grasp hand and slowly bend wrist forward until stretch is felt. Hold 10-15 seconds. Relax. Repeat 10 times per set. Do 1 set per session. Do 1-3 sessions per day.

Wrist Flexion: Resisted

With tubing wrapped around affected fist and other end secured under foot, bend wrist up (palm up) as far as possible. Keep forearm on thigh. Repeat 15-20 times per set. Do 1-2 sets per session. Do 1-2 sessions per day.

Wrist Extension: Resisted

With tubing wrapped around affected fist and other end secured under foot, bend wrist up (palm down) as far as possible. Keep forearm on thigh. Repeat 15-20 times per set. Do 1-2 sets per session. Do 1-2 sessions per day.

Radial Deviation: Resisted

With tubing wrapped around affected fist and other end secured under foot, bend wrist up (thumb side up) as far as possible. Keep forearm on thigh. Repeat 15-20 times per set. Do 1-2 sets per session. Do 1-2 sessions per day.

Ulnar Deviation: Resisted

With tubing wrapped around affected fist and other end secured, palm down, bend wrist out to side (thumb in) as far as possible. Keep forearm braced on knee. Repeat 15-20 times per set. Do 1-2 sets per session. Do 1-2 sessions per day.

Elbow Flexion: Resisted

With tubing wrapped around affected fist and other end secured under foot, curl arm up as far as possible. Repeat 15-20 times per set. Do 1-2 sets per session. Do 1-2 sessions per day.

Elbow Extension: Resisted

With tubing wrapped around affected fist and other end anchored, straighten elbow. Repeat 15-20 times per set. Do 1-2 sets per session. Do 1-2 sessions per day.

Forearm Supination / Pronation: Resisted

With 1-5 pound object in affected hand, slowly turn palm up, then down. Repeat 15-20 times per set. Do 1-2 sets per session. Do 1-2 sessions per day.

Elbow Flexion: Resisted

With affected arm straight, thumb forward, Holding a 1-10 pound weight, bend elbow. Return slowly. Repeat 15-20 times per set. Do 1-2 sets per session. Do 1-2 sessions per day.

Wrist Ulnar Deviation: Resisted (Standing)

With affected arm at side, thumb forward, 1-6 pound weight in hand, bend wrist forward. Return slowly. Repeat 15 times per set. Do 1 set per session. Do 1-2 sessions per day.

Elbow Extension: Resisted

Lie on back, 1-8 pound weight in affected hand, arm up, elbow bent and supported. Straighten elbow. Return slowly. Repeat 15-20 times per set. Do 1-2 sets per session. Do 1-2 sessions per day.