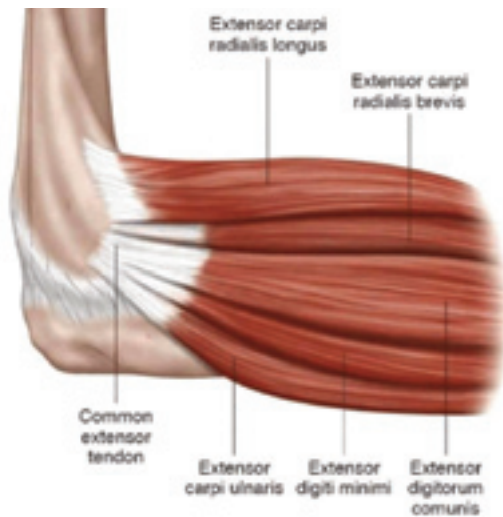


# Lateral Epicondylitis (Tennis Elbow) Surgery



## When is it Time to Think About Surgery?

Lateral epicondylitis is an inflammation of the tendons that originate on the outside of the elbow, which predominantly extend the wrist and fingers. The tendon injury is from repetitive stress that causes micro-tears that occur faster than the body can heal. When prolonged splinting, physical therapy, NSAIDs, and cortisone injections have not helped, typically at least 6 months, surgery may be considered.

## About the Surgery

The surgery involves making a small cut over the outside of the elbow. An incision is made in the common extensor tendon and the diseased areas of the tendon are identified. These areas usually involve the extensor carpi radialis brevis tendon. The diseased tendon is removed, the bony attachment is scraped to healthy bleeding bone to promote healing, and the healthy tendon is sutured back together.

## Preparing for Surgery

You are encouraged to stop smoking before surgery to prevent lung complications or delayed healing. Pre-

admission testing (lab work, EKG, chest x-ray) will be scheduled prior to your surgery. Medications such as anti-inflammatory medications, aspirin, and blood thinning medications should be stopped one week before surgery unless otherwise specified by your family doctor.

## What to Expect After Surgery

After surgery, you will be in a splint at the wrist to rest the involved tendon for about 6 weeks. You can perform light activities during this time.

## Complications and Risks of Surgery

Risks of surgery include pain, bleeding, infection, damage to surrounding structures, stiffness, loss of function, failure of the tendon to heal, or blood clots in the arm that can go to the lung (pulmonary embolus). Anesthetic risks include heart attack, stroke, blindness, and death.

## Recovery

When the splint comes off at 6 weeks after surgery, physical therapy is initiated. As movement and strength return, you will be allowed to ease back into gentle activities. The tendon should be healed about 12 weeks post-surgery, and based on progress with therapy, you will be allowed to resume more normal activities as your strength allows.

## Return to Work

Return to work is highly individualized. Jobs requiring only deskwork may be able to return within 1-2 weeks, whereas heavy lifting manual labor jobs may require 3 months or longer to return without restrictions.