

Elbow Arthritis

Explanation of Diagnosis

Elbow osteoarthritis (OA) is a degenerative joint condition where the **cartilage in the elbow wears down over time**, leading to **pain, stiffness, swelling, and reduced range of motion**. It may develop due to **aging, repetitive stress, prior injuries, or heavy manual labor**. Bone spurs (osteophytes) can also form, further limiting movement.

Specific Work Modifications

- **Avoid** repetitive heavy lifting, gripping, and forceful pushing/pulling motions.
- **Modify workstation setup** to reduce strain (ergonomic tools, adjustable chair, wrist/elbow supports).
- **Take frequent breaks** to stretch and change positions.
- **Use a brace or compression sleeve** for support if needed.
- **Avoid prolonged static postures** (e.g., keeping the elbow bent for long periods).

Specific Activity Modifications

- **Avoid** high-impact activities (e.g., tennis, weightlifting, contact sports) that stress the elbow joint.
- **Modify** golf, fishing, or racquet sports by using lighter equipment and ergonomic grips.
- **For artistic or craft activities**, use cushioned grips and take breaks to prevent stiffness.
- **Swimming and cycling** are excellent low-impact alternatives to maintain joint mobility.

Recommended Supplements

- **Glucosamine & Chondroitin (1500 mg/1200 mg daily)** - May support joint cartilage.
- **Omega-3 fatty acids (1000 mg daily)** - Reduces inflammation and stiffness.
- **Curcumin (Turmeric) (500 mg twice daily)** - Natural anti-inflammatory.
- **Collagen peptides (10 g daily)** - Supports connective tissue health.
- **Vitamin D (1000-2000 IU daily)** - Supports bone and joint health.

Recommended Nutrition and Hydration

Diet Recommendations:

- **Anti-inflammatory foods:** Fatty fish (salmon), berries, nuts, and leafy greens.
- **Joint-supporting foods:** Bone broth, citrus fruits, bell peppers (rich in collagen-boosting nutrients).
- **Limit processed foods and sugar**, which can worsen inflammation.
- **Maintain a healthy weight**, as excess body weight increases joint stress.

Hydration Tips:

- **Drink 2-3 liters of water daily** to maintain joint lubrication.
- **Limit alcohol and caffeine**, which can dehydrate tissues and worsen symptoms.

Home Exercise Prescription

Perform **2-3 times daily** to improve mobility and reduce stiffness:

1. **Elbow Flexion & Extension Stretch**
 - Slowly bend and straighten your elbow.
 - **10 reps, 2-3 times daily.**
2. **Forearm Rotation (Supination/Pronation)**
 - Rotate the palm up and down while keeping the elbow bent at 90°.
 - **10 reps, 2-3 times daily.**
3. **Wrist Flexor & Extensor Stretch**
 - Hold the wrist in a gentle stretch forward and backward for **20-30 seconds, 3 times each direction.**
4. **Isometric Biceps & Triceps Hold**
 - Press against a wall without moving the arm, holding for **5 seconds, 10 reps.**
5. **Grip Strength Exercise**
 - Squeeze a stress ball or therapy putty for **10-15 reps, 2 times daily.**

Avoid high-impact or heavy resistance exercises that aggravate pain.

Helpful Books

1. "Arthritis Without Pain: The Miracle of TNF Blockers" - Scott J. Zashin, MD
2. "The Pain-Free Program: A Proven Method to Relieve Back, Neck, Shoulder, and Joint Pain" - Anthony Carey

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Contact a Key West orthopedic clinic or reach out to Dr. Jason Pirozzolo.