

Tennis Elbow

There are few other problems in the upper extremity that are so poorly understood and mismanaged as tennis elbow. Tennis elbow is a common problem causing pain about the elbow on either the medial or lateral side. There have been many explanations as to why this pain occurs. There have been just as many treatments and most of those are fraught with problems and simply do not work. Many of us have seen people wearing a compressive band around the elbow for months at a time and then finally undergoing a tennis elbow operation which when performed in the traditional way may be very unsatisfying.

At The Hand Center, we have developed a treatment for tennis elbow that we have found to be highly effective over the last 15 years. We believe tennis elbow is caused by a relative shortness of the muscle tendon units at their origin as they come off of the medial or lateral epicondyle bone at the elbow. The muscles are tight

in this area and sometimes there is an associated tear. There may be hypertrophy of the muscle within the fibrous muscle covering. Non-operative treatment includes anti-inflammatory medication and therapy. However, if this does not result in significant improvement within a few weeks or if the patient chooses not to go this route, we are very confident in performing our particular type of tennis elbow release. When we perform a tennis elbow release, we release and lengthen the muscle origins but we don't do so in the traditional manner. Traditionally the surgeon simply makes cuts transversely across the muscle origin which allows the muscle to gape apart lengthening the muscle. This unfortunately results in a large surface area of open, raw muscle which requires months of healing and a very painful post-operative period results. Often with the traditional treatment, the pain is just as bad or worse for months compared to before the operation. With our treatment, we perform

a z-plasty lengthening and closure of the lengthened muscle tendon units leaving no raw, exposed muscle to heal. In our experience, healing is usually quite rapid over a few weeks to several weeks compared to several months following the typical traditional tennis elbow release.